قُرْاٰنٌ مَجِيْدٌ

THE HOLY QURAN

WITH

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

AND

COMMENTARY

VOLUME 3

SŪRAH YŪNUS–SŪRAH AL-KAHF

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and Supreme Head of the Worldwide
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE
(1988 Edition)

This five volume commentary of the Holy Quran is an English translation of the commentary on the Holy Quran by the Second Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II.

His published work on the Holy Quran comprises a ten volume commentary in Urdu (*Tafseer-e-Kabir*) covering the following Surahs: *Al-Fatihah* & *Al-Baqarah*, *Yunus* to *Al-Ankabut* and from *Al-Naba* to *Al-Nas*. The present English commentary is based on that commentary. As far as the remaining Surahs are concerned, that is chapters: *Al-i-Imran* to *Al-Taubah* and from *Al-Ahqaf* to *Al-Mursalat*, the compiling Editors have made use of the extensive notes prepared by the late Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II in preparing a detailed and comprehensive commentary which he was unfortunately unable to complete in his life time. The commentary of such chapters is nonetheless based on his own deliberations.

This commentary is a unique masterpiece. It is an excellent exegesis on the true meaning of the Holy Quran. Although no commentary can ever claim to encompass the final interpretation of the Holy Quran, the manner in which this rich treasure has been prised open by an author who had deep insight into the meaning of the Holy Quran, has certainly set the standard by which all future commentaries ought to be judged.

An index and the following listings have been added in the present edition at the end of the fifth volume:

Table of contents of the Index
Alphabetical listing of chapters of the Holy Quran.
Important Arabic words and expressions explained in the commentary
The Index of subjects.

The Publishers acknowledge and sincerely thank the following members of U. S. A. Jamaat in particular and their helpers in general for the very careful and hard work in preparing these listings and the index so exhaustively:

Aisha Sharif, Nyceemah Yaqub, Aisha Hakim, Shakura Nooriah, Salma Ghani, Kadija el Hadi, Rafia Ramah, Khulat Alladin, Dhiya Tahira, Uzma Saeed, Farzana Qader and Fatima Haneef.

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Mahmood and Munir-ud-Din Shams Add. Vakil-ul-Ishaat in revising the index and listings and then checking the proofs with the cooperation of Lajna and Ansar of U. K. May Allah bless them all.

The cost of publishing this five-volume commentary has been met jointly by members of the Ahmadiyya Community in the United States of America and the United Kingdom on the happy occasion of the thanksgiving Centenary Jubilee Celebrations of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community in Islam.

The funds generated from its sale will be recycled in the further publication of the Holy Quran. May Allah grant abundant reward to all those who have contributed towards this publication.

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Chapter 14 (Ibrāhīm)

- Introduction ... 1523
- Text, Translation and Commentary ... 1525

Chapter 15 (Al-Ḥijr)

- Introduction ... 1565
- Text, Translation and Commentary ... 1567

Chapter 16 (An-Naḥl)

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- Text, Translation and Commentary ... 1641

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FOREWORD

The Holy Quran is the Word of God Almighty that was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, over a period of 23 years. Since its revelation, the inimitability of its text has been widely acclaimed and acknowledged by friend and foe alike. Its verses made such a miraculous impact that some enemies of Islam, driven by extreme frustration, resorted to calling it magic, accusing the Holy Prophet^{sa} of being a sorcerer, and preventing their fellow non-Muslims from hearing its recitation. Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time before its greatest enemies became its greatest admirers, or were destroyed in the very process of seeking its destruction.

Allah the Exalted says in the Holy Quran that He Himself would safeguard it:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ

> Verily We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian. (Al-Ḥijr 15:10)

Under the close and careful guidance of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, the earliest Muslims—including the scribes, and those who had memorized the Book—exercised great care and precaution in its compilation, recitation, and preservation. Meticulous care was taken to ensure that the words of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the personal notes of his Companions^{ra} were not intermixed with the Word of God.

Once the text had been fully preserved and disseminated widely, the need was felt for commentaries. However, as the Word of God is replete with sublime prophecies and profound verities, the infinite magnificence of the Holy Quran can never be fully comprehended in any commentary. Nevertheless, to help readers understand the historical context and significance of the revealed verses, several commentaries were written by eminent scholars. These commentaries generally relied on the Ḥadith, Sunnah, lexicons, and historical texts. However, in this process, some went to the extent of accepting the traditions of the Jews and Christians in commenting upon some verses. In the last few centuries, some orientalists have written commentaries on the Holy Quran and have critiqued some verses based upon their own traditions and perceptions of history.

The Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī^{as} was commissioned to revive faith and establish the law of Islam. Accordingly, his very first book, *Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyya,* was devoted to establish the divine origin of the Holy Quran and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad^{sa}.

The Five Volume Commentary is based upon the divinely inspired commentaries made by Ḥaḍrat al-Muṣleḥ al-Mau'ūd, Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad^{ra}, the second Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}. It builds upon the early Islamic sources and the divinely inspired insights of the Promised Messiah^{as} to bring a fresh new perspective on the Quran's versatility and meaning. It also effectively and forcefully responds to the criticism of the Latter Day orientalists.

The current edition of the Five Volume Commentary corrects scribal errors and makes minor editorial changes to promote readability. Typesetting and initial formatting of this edition of the Five Volume Commentary was done by Wakalat-e-Ishā'at under the supervision of Mirza Anas Aḥmad, M.A., M.Litt., (Oxon.). Final proofreading and valuable suggestions for improvement were provided by various individuals, including the following: Khalil Malik, Rashida Kalim Rana, Naser-ud-Din Shams, Sardar Anees Ahmad, Sabahat Ahmad Cheema, Hassan Khan, Faraz Husain, Abdul-Wahab Mirza, Qamar Ahmed Zafar, Zulfiqar Abbasi, Ahmad Nooruddeen Jangeerkhan, Aneeq ur Rehman, Nafees Qamar Ahmed, and Syed Tanwir Mujtaba. May Allah the Almighty grant all of them the best reward in this life and the Hereafter. *Āmīn.*

Al-Ḥāj Munir-ud-Din Shams
Additional Wakīl-ut-Taṣnīf
London, England
September 2018

PREFACE
(1988 Edition)

The First Volume of this Commentary comprising the first nine chapters of the Quran was published in 1947. The present book which is Volume II (Part I) deals with the next nine Chapters—from *Sūra* Yūnus to *Sūra* Al-Kahf.

The Arabic text has been given side by side with the English translation. A mere translation without the text is likely, in the long run, to endanger the purity of the text besides depriving the reader of the opportunity of comparison, verification and critical study.

The annotations of the text have been generally divided into two parts. The first deals with Important Words in the verse under comment. These words, along with other words derived from the same root, particularly those occurring in other parts of the Quran, have been explained and examples given to illustrate their different uses. These explanations are based on the standard lexicons of the Arabic language, such as the Lisān al-'Arab, the Tāj al-'Arūs, the Mufradāt of Imām Rāghib, the Arabic-English Lexicon by E. W. Lane and the Aqrab al-Mawārid. As regards the translation, our procedure has been to base the meaning of every word first on the corroborative testimony of other parts of the Quran and secondly on the context. The words printed in italics have been introduced to explain the meaning of the text, there being no words corresponding to them in the original.

The second part consists of explanatory notes or Commentary. Every note first derives its authority from the tenor and spirit of the Quran as expressed in various other places. Next to the Quran precedence is given to the Ḥadīth and then come the standard dictionaries of the Arabic language. Last of all, recourse has been had to the evidence of history which was necessary for the explanation of such verses as refer to well-known historical events.

In the course of the preparation of these notes light has been thrown from time to time on the order which runs through the verses of each chapter, the one following the other in natural sequence; and a careful perusal of these notes will convince the reader that the Quran forms a thoroughly coherent and consistent reading.

Special care is taken in the Commentary to refute the principal objections raised against Islam by Christian writers. These objections are based either on ignorance or on deliberate misrepresentation of the true teachings of Islam on the part of these writers. Refutation of such objections helps to remove much bias and prejudice against Islam and to create an atmosphere for a better appreciation of its teachings.

A system of cross-references has been introduced. These cross-references have been placed below the text and the translation. They give at a glance the various places where the subject of a particular verse has been dealt with in the Quran.

An Introduction is prefixed to each chapter, in addition to the General Introduction which serves as an introduction to the whole Book. The Introduction to each chapter discusses the place and date of its revelation and gives a summary of its contents and the relation it has with the chapters preceding or following it. It also provides sufficient material for the reader to understand and realize that not only the verses of the various chapters but also the specific position of each chapter itself is governed by an intelligent order.

The abbreviations CH. and PT. appearing at the top of each page stand for Chapter and Part respectively. The Quran has been divided into two sets of divisions, (a) *Sūrās* or Chapters and (b) *Sipārās* or Parts. The division of the Quran into *Sūrās* is made according to its subject matter and has the authority of the Holy Prophet, and of the Quran itself for each of these chapters has been given the name of *Sūra* in the Quran itself, as in 2:24 and 24:2. The total number of the *Sūrās* is 114.

The division into *Juzws*, *Sipārās* or Parts, however, is arbitrary and has no reference to the subject-matter. The Quran has been divided into 30 equal Parts for the convenience of readers.

The number of Chapters and Parts is shown on the top of each page. In numbering the verses we have followed the system in vogue in the standard editions of the Quran in India, with the exception that in our numbering *Bismillah* is counted as the first verse of every chapter, while in other editions the verse following *Bismillah* is numbered as the first verse of the chapter. Chapter 9, however, is an exception to this rule. It does not begin with *Bismillah*, and therefore in this chapter our numbering is identical with that of other editions of the Quran. Our numbering of the notes is continuous. It does not end where a *Sūra* ends but is continued into the next *Sūra* to the end of the Book.

In references the figure on the left side of the colon shows the number of the chapter, while that on its right the number of the verse. It should also be noted that when reference is to a chapter of the Quran, the word Quran is invariably omitted for brevity's sake. Thus 20:8 refers to the 8th verse of the

20th chapter of the Quran. In references to other religious Scriptures, however, the name of the book is invariably mentioned, though generally in an abbreviated form. Thus Gen. 5:6 means the 6th verse of the fifth chapter of Genesis, the first book of Moses.

In using quotations, we have followed the system now in vogue in standard works. In quotations which exceed one line inverted commas have been avoided, but the quotations are given in closer type in order to distinguish them from the rest of the matter. Brief quotations, however, have been enclosed by inverted commas.

We cannot close this prefatory note without acknowledging our sincere thanks to Dr. A. J. Arberry, the well-known Orientalist, and Sir Ronald Storrs, K.C.M.G., C.B.E., ex-High Commissioner of Palestine for the valuable suggestions they made in regard to the translation of the text and to Mr. F. W. Bustin, Editor, The Civil & Military Gazette, Lahore, who kindly revised the whole manuscript.

THE EDITORS

Books of Reference with Their Abbreviated Titles

Some commentators have given single letters or a group of letters as abbreviations for the authorities they have quoted. These are not of much help to the reader, who has to turn to the list of abbreviations again and again in order to ascertain to which authority the letter refers. But it also seems cumbrous to give the names of the authorities in full. So we have followed a middle course and have given a shortened form of the name, which generally consists in a part of the name of the book or its author. Thus, for instance, instead of *Al-Baḥrul-Muḥīṭ* by Abū Ḥayyān, we have simply given the word *Muḥīṭ*, and for *Sīratun-Nabī* by Ibn Hishām, the abbreviated form *Hishām* is given. These abbreviated names easily suggest to the reader the book or the author to which reference is made. No shortened form, however, has been used for the authorities that are not frequently quoted. In case of the books of the Bible, we have made use of the abbreviations that are generally used in Christian literature. Following is a list of well-known works of reference and other important books to which we have referred in this Commentary. We have taken special care to give the full name of each book and its author along with its abbreviated title.

Books of Ḥadith

Shortened name.	**Full name with the name of the author.**
Bukhārī	*The Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī*, by Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl Bukhārī.
Muslim	*The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim*, by Ḥāfiẓ Abul-Ḥusain Muslim bin Ḥajjāj al-Qushairī.
Tirmidhī	*The Jāmi‘ of Tirmidhī* by Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad bin ‘Īsā Tirmidhī.
Dāwūd or Abū Dāwūd	*Sunan of Abū Dāwūd* by Ḥāfiẓ Sulaimān bin Ash‘ath Abū Dāwūd.
Mājah	*Sunan of Ibn Mājah* by Muḥammad bin Yazīd Abū ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mājah Qazwīnī.
Musnad	*Musnad of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal* by Imām Abū ‘Abdullāh Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.
Nasa’ī	*Sunan of Nasa’ī* by Ḥāfiẓ Abū ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Aḥmad bin Shu‘aib Nasa’ī.
Mu’aṭṭa	*Mu’aṭṭa* by Imām Mālik.
Baihaqī	*Sunan of Baihaqī*, by Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Ḥusain al-Baihaqī.
‘Ummāl	*Kanz-ul-Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wal Af‘āl* by Shaikh ‘Alā-ud-Dīn ‘Alī al-Muttaqī.
Quṭnī	*Sunan of Dār Quṭnī* by Ḥāfiẓ ‘Alī bin ‘Umar ad-Dār Quṭnī.
Qasṭalānī	*Irshād as-Sārī* by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb Qasṭalānī.

Bārī	..	*Fatḥul-Bārī* by Abul-Faḍl Shihāb-ud-Dīn Aḥmad bin ‘Alī ‘Asqalānī.
Ṣaghīr	..	*Al-Jāmi‘-aṣ-Ṣaghīr fī Aḥādīth al-Bashīr an-Nadhīr*.
‘Asākir	..	*Ibn ‘Asākir* by Abul-Qāsim ‘Alī bin al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Asākir.
Merdawaih	..	*Merdawaih* by Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Mūsā bin Merdawaih.
Ṭaḥāwī	..	*Sharaḥ Ma‘ānī al-Āthār* by Abū Ja‘far aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī.
Manāwī	..	*At-Tafsīr*, exposition of *al-Jāmi‘-aṣ-Ṣaghīr*, by Imām ‘Abdur-Ra’ūf al-Manāwī.

Commentaries of the Quran

Jarīr	..	*Commentary of the Qur’ān* by Imām Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī.
Kathīr	..	*The Tafsīr* of Abul Fidā Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr.
Kashshāf	..	*Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ghawāmiḍ at-Tanzīl* by Imām Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī.
Muḥīṭ	..	*Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ* by Athīr-ud-Dīn Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf of Granada (Spain), alias Abū Ḥayyān.
Manthūr	..	*Durri Manthūr* by Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl-ud-Dīn ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Suyūṭī.
Ma‘ānī	..	*Rūḥ-ul-Ma‘ānī* by Abul Faḍl Shihāb-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Baghdādī.
Baiḍāwī	..	*Anwār-ut-Tanzīl* by Qāḍī Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Abū Sa‘īd Baiḍāwī.
Qadīr	..	*Fatḥ-ul-Qadīr* by Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī ash-Shaukānī.
Fatḥ	..	*Fatḥ-ul-Bayān* by Abuṭ-Ṭayyib Ṣiddīq Ibn Ḥasan.
Rāzī	..	*At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Imām Muḥammad Fakhr-ud-Dīn Rāzī.
Bayān	..	*Rūḥ-ul-Bayān* by Shaikh Ismā’īl Ḥaqqī.
Tafsīr	..	*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community.
Tha‘labī	..	*Jawāhir-ul-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr-il-Qur’ān* by Shaikh ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Tha‘labī.
Qurṭubī	..	*Qurṭubī* by Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī.

Lexicons, Encyclopaedias and Periodicals

Biḥār	..	*Majma‘ Biḥār-ul-Anwār*, by Shaikh Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Gujrāt.
Kulliyāt or Baqā	..	*Al-Kulliyāt* by Abul Baqā al-Ḥusainī.
Mufradāt	..	*Al-Mufradāt fī Gharā’ib-al-Qur’ān* by Shaikh Abul-Qāsim Ḥusain Ibn Muḥammad ar-Rāghib.
Lisān	..	*Lisān-ul-‘Arab* by Imām Abul Faḍl Jamāl-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Mukarram.
Tāj	..	*Tāj-ul-‘Arūs* by Abul Faiḍ Sayyid Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusainī.
Lane	..	*Arabic-English Lexicon* by E. W. Lane.
Qāmūs	..	*The Qāmūs* by Shaikh Naṣr Abul Wafā.
Ṣiḥāḥ	..	*The Ṣiḥāḥ* by Abun-Naṣr Ismā’īl Jauharī.
Aqrab	..	*Aqrab-ul-Mawārid* by Sa‘īd al-Khaurī ash-Shartūnī.
Miṣbāḥ	..	*Al-Miṣbāḥ-ul-Munīr* by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Fayūmī.

Gesenius	..	*The Hebrew-English Lexicon* by Gesenius.
Enc. Bri.	..	*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edition.
Enc. Rel. Eth.	..	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.
Jew. Enc.	..	*Jewish Encyclopaedia*.
Enc. Bib.	..	*Encyclopaedia Biblica*.
Enc. Islam	..	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
Rev. Rel.	..	*The Review of Religions*, Qadian.
Cruden	..	*Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha*.

History and Geography

Ṭabarī	..	*Tārīkh-ur-Rusul wal-Mulūk* by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī.
Isḥāq	..	*Ibn Isḥāq*.
Sīrat	..	*Sīrat Khātam-un-Nabīyyīn* by Mirzā Bashīr Aḥmad, M. A., Qadian.
Muir	..	*Life of Mahomet* by Sir William Muir, K. C. S. I. (1923).
The Caliphate	..	*The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall* by Sir William Muir, K. C. S. I.
Hishām	..	*Sīrat-un-Nabī* by Shaikh Abū Muḥammad 'Abdul-Mālik Ibn Hishām.
Futūh	..	*Futūḥ-ul-Buldān* by Balādharī.
Ṭabaqāt	..	*Aṭ-Ṭabaqāt-al-Kabīr* by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd.
Khamīs	..	*Tārīkh-ul-Khamīs* by Shaikh Ḥusain Ibn Muḥammad ad-Diyār al-Bakrī.
Zurqānī	..	*Sharḥ Zurqānī* by Imām Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdul-Bāqī az-Zurqānī.
Ghābbah	..	*Usdul-Ghābbah fī Ma'rifatiṣ-Ṣaḥābah* by Ḥāfiẓ Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad.
Ma'ād	..	*Zād-ul-Ma'ād fī Hadyi Khair-al-'Ibād* by Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Ayyūb ad-Damishqī.
Buldān	..	*Mu'jam al-Buldān* by Abū 'Abdullāh Yāqūt Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Baghdādī.
Dhahab	..	*Murūj-udh-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jauhar* by 'Allāma Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain al-Mas'ūdī.
Athīr		*Kāmil Ibn-e-Athīr* by Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Abul Karam *alias* Ibn-ul-Athīr.
Mawāhib	..	*Mawāhib al-Ladunniyya* by Shihāb-ud-Dīn Aḥmad Qasṭalānī.
Khaldūn	..	*Tārīkh-ul-Imām Ibn Khaldūn* by 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn al-Maghribī.
Ḥalbiyyah	..	*Sīrat-ul-Ḥalbiyyah* by 'Aliyy Ibn Burhān-ud-Dīn al-Ḥalbī.

Taṣawwuf and 'Aqā'id

Futūḥāt	..	*Al-Futūḥāt-ul-Makkīyyah* by Muḥy-ud-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī.
'Awārif	..	*'Awārif-ul-Ma'ārif* by Abul-Ḥaqq 'Umar Ibn Muḥammad.
Zāhirī	..	*Dāwūd Zāhirī*.

Malā’ikah .. *Malāi’katullāh* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ II.

Science of Philology and Polite Literature

Mubarrad .. *Kitāb-ul-Kāmil* by Abul ‘Abbās Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad.
Mu‘allaqāt .. *Sab‘a Mu‘allaqāt*, the seven well-known poems by seven eminent Pre-Islamic poets.

Grammar

Sībawaih .. *Sībawaih* by Abul Bashr ‘Amr Sībawaih.
Wright .. *A Grammar of the Arabic language* by W. Wright, LL.D.

Jurisprudence

Muḥallā .. *Al-Muḥallā* by Imām Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sa‘īd Ibn Ḥazm.
Merdawaih .. *Ibn Merdawaih.*

Ma‘ānī

Mukhtaṣar .. *Al-Mukhtaṣar al-Ma‘ānī* by Mas‘ūd Ibn ‘Umar *alias* Sa‘d Taftāzānī.
Muṭawwal .. *Al-Muṭawwal* by Mas‘ūd Ibn ‘Umar *alias* Sa‘d Taftāzānī.

Works of the Promised Messiah

Tauḍīḥ .. *Tauḍīḥ-e-Marām.*
Ā’īnah .. *Ā’īna’-e-Kamālāt-e-Islām.*
Ḥaqīqat .. *Ḥaqīqatul-Waḥī.*
Izāla .. *Izāla-’e-Auhām.*
Teachings .. *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam.*

Books of the Bible

Gen. .. *Genesis.*
Exod. .. *Exodus.*
Lev. .. *Leviticus.*
Num. .. *Numbers.*
Deut. .. *Deuteronomy.*
Neh. .. *Nehemiah.*
Isa. .. *Isaiah.*
Ezek. .. *Ezekiel.*
Mal. .. *Malachi.*
Matt. .. *Matthew.*
Rev. .. *Revelation of St. John, The New Testament.*

Miscellaneous

Among other works which are not included in the above list, but which have been consulted in the course of the preparation of the Commentary, may be mentioned the following (the list is by no means exhaustive):

Asās	..	*Ḥaqīqat-ul-Asās*.
Māwardī	..	*Al-Māwardī*.
Izālat-ul-Khifā ‘an Khilāfat al-Khulafā’	by	Ḥaḍrat Shāh Walī Allah of Delhi.
The Al-Ḥakam, Qadian.		
The Al-Faḍl, Qadian.		
The Tomb of Jesus	By	Dr. M. M. Ṣādiq, Qadian.
The Bible.		
The Zend-Avesta.		
The Dasātir.		
The Jāmāspi	by	Jāmāsap, First Successor of Zoroaster.
Dictionary & Glossary of the Quran	by	John Penrice.
Historians’ History of the World.		
History of the Arabs	by	P. K. Hitti.
The History of Napoleon Bonaparte.	by	John Abbott
E. Renan’s History of the People of Israel.		
Josephus: History of the Jewish Nation.		
Hutchinson’s History of the Nations.		
The Apocrypha.		
The Dawn of Conscience	by	James Henry Breasted.
Moses and Monotheism	by	Sigmund Freud.
Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire	by	Edward Gibbon.
Biblical Cyclopaedia	by	J. Eadie.
Diodorus Siculus (Translation by C. M, Oldfather, London, 1935.)		
The Pilgrimage	by	Lieut. Burton.
The Jewish Foundation of Islam.		
Scoffield Reference Bible.		
Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature (New York, 1877).		
Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by Rev. A. Mingana, D.D.		
Translation of the Targums	by	J. W. Etheridge.
Capital Punishment in the Twentieth Century	by	E. Roy Calvert.
Lalita Vistara (Sk.).		
Buddha-Charita (Sk.).		
The Making of Humanity	by	Robert Briffault.
On Heroes And Hero-Worship	by	Thomas Carlyle.
History of Palestine and the Jews	by	John Kitto (London, 1844).

American Medical Journal.		
Indo-Aryans	by	R. Mitra, LL.D., C.I.E.
The Talmud (Selections by H. Polano).		
Commentary	by	C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester.
Commentaries on the Old and the New Testaments		published by Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London.
Sharḥ as-Sunnah	by	Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusain Ibn Mas‘ūd al-Baghwī.
Faṣl-ul-Khiṭāb	by	Ḥaḍrat Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn Khalīfatul-Masīḥ I.
Khuṭubāt-e-Aḥmadiyyah	by	Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, K.C.S.I.

System of Transliteration

In transliterating Arabic words we have followed the system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.

ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word 'honour'.

ث *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word 'thing'.

ح *h*, a guttural aspirate, stronger than h.

خ *kh*, pronounced, like the Scotch *ch* in 'loch'.

ذ *dh*, pronounced like the English *th* in 'that', 'with'.

ص *ṣ*, strongly articulated s.

ض *ḍ*, similar to the English *th* in 'this'.

ط *ṭ*, strongly articulated palatal t.

ظ *ẓ*, strongly articulated z.

ع ‘, a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.

غ *gh*, a sound approaches very nearly in the r 'grasseye' in French, and in the German r. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the 'gargling' position whilst pronouncing it.

ق *q*, a deep guttural *k* sound.

ء ’, a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by *a* for ـَ (like *u* in 'bud'); *i* for ـِ (like *i* in 'bid'); *u* for ـُ (like *oo* in 'wood'); the long vowels by *ā* for ـٰ or آ (like *a* in 'father'); *ī* for ى or ـِ (like *ee* in 'deep'); *ai* for ى ـَ (like *i* in 'site'); ū for و ـٗ (like *oo* in 'root'); *au* for و ـَ (resembling *ou* in 'sound').

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

There are, however, some names which have not been spelt according to the rules of transliteration. They are names which frequently occur in Ahmadiyya literature and so it has been thought more convenient to give them in the form in which they are familiar to our readers. Some of these names are the following:

(1) The Quran.
(2) Muhammad (on whom be peace and the blessings of God).
(3) Ahmadiyya.
(4) Ahmad or Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.
(5) Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih

II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community

Under the transliteration rules, the above names should have been spelt thus:

(1) The Qur'ān.

(2) Muḥammad.

(3) Aḥmadiyya.

(4) Aḥmad or Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

(5) Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Khalīfat al-Masīḥ II, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community

CHAPTER 10

YŪNUS

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Place and Time of Revelation

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Some commentators have ascribed some of its verses to the Medinite period, but their opinion is not based on facts; they have made the inference merely from the subject matter of the verses.

Title and Connection

The *Sūrah* is named Yūnus (Jonah) not because, as some may think, it contains an account of the Prophet of that name but because the subject matter of the whole *Sūrah* is based on a particular incident in the life of the Prophet Yūnus. Many *Sūrahs* of the Quran have been named after certain Prophets or certain objects. This has not been done in a haphazard manner. The *Sūrahs* have been given those names in order to show that their contents have a bearing on those persons or things whose names they bear.

On pondering over the contents of the Quran we notice not only that its verses are interrelated but also that every *Sūrah* is connected with the one preceding it and the one following it. Moreover, certain groups of Quranic chapters are linked with other groups. Thus we find that a perfect order runs throughout the Quran. The different chapters of the Quran are related to one another in more ways than one; and when we consider their order and arrangement, we are left in no doubt that the Quran is indeed a great miracle of diction.

This *Sūrah* possesses a threefold connection with the previous one. Firstly, it is a continuation of the previous chapter. Two subjects were mentioned in the concluding portions of the previous *Sūrah*: (a) the revelation of the Book and its denial (9:127); (b) the coming of the Messenger of God and the benefit derived from him (9:128). The same subject is continued in the present *Sūrah*. First, it mentions the importance of the Book (10:2) and next it refers to the Divine Messenger (10:3).

Secondly, this *Sūrah* completes the subject matter of the previous *Sūrah*. In chapter 9 (which is not really a separate chapter but forms part of chapter 8) reference was made to the fact that the time of the prosperity of Islam had come and God's promises were going to be fulfilled in all their glory and power. Thus were men exhorted to turn to the purification of their hearts that their repentance might be accepted. As doubt might arise in the hearts of some people that—on account of the enormity of their sins—their repentance might not be accepted by God, chapter 10 stresses the fact that

God’s mercy dominates and transcends all things but it requires the highest form of repentance to draw that mercy.

Thirdly, all the chapters of the Quran from chapter 2 to chapter 9 (which are really seven in number; for, as stated above, chapter 9 is not a separate chapter but forms part of chapter 8 and was written separately only on account of the specific importance of its subject matter) deal with one kind of subject, while with chapter Yūnus (Ch. 10) begins a new group of *Sūrahs*, ending with Ch. 18. This second group deals with a distinct and separate theme, yet its subject matter is closely connected with that of the first group. In the first group the truth of Islam is established by reference to the Holy Prophet and his work, and an appeal is made for the acceptance of Islam in view of the superiority of its principles, the excellence of its teachings, the vastness of the spiritual knowledge which it holds out to seekers after truth, the wisdom underlying its teachings and its extraordinary impact. In the second group, comprising *Sūrahs* 10 to 18, emphasis is laid on the need of prophethood, the importance of religion and the object of the Holy Prophet’s advent by referring particularly to the criteria of prophethood, the claims and history of previous Prophets and to the arguments based upon and supported by human reason and common sense.

Thus the subject matter of the two groups is very closely related to one another. The only difference is that in the first group reference is made to the prophecies which were made at the advent of the Holy Prophet or which had been made by previous Prophets and were fulfilled in due time, thus bearing witness to the truth of the Holy Prophet and of Islam. In the second group the truth of Islam has been explained on its own merits and on the basis of the canons of prophethood.

رکوعاتها ۱۱ سُوۡرَۃُ یُوۡنُسَ مَکِّیَّۃٌ ۱۰ اٰیاتها ۱۱۰

(YŪNUS)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.**1277**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ﴿۱﴾

2. [b]Alif Lām Rā. [c]These are the verses of the Book that is full of wisdom.**1277A**

الٓرٰ ۟ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾

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[a]See 1:1. [b]11:2; 12:2; 13:2; 14:2; 15:2. [c]26:2; 27:2; 31:3.

1277. Commentary:

See 1:1.

1277A. Important Words:

The abbreviated letters الر (*Alif Lām Rā*) stand for the words انا اللّٰہ اریٰ i.e. I am Allah Who is All-Seeing. For a detailed discussion of the مقطعات (abbreviations) see 2:2.

تلك (these) is a demonstrative pronoun used to indicate something distant. See also 2:3.

Commentary:

The placing of the particle تلك (these), which relates to something remote and distant, before the words *verses of the Book* which evidently are not remote, is not without reason. Various explanations have been given for this: Firstly, it has been said that the revelation of the Quran had been promised in previous Scriptures and the word تلك (these) has been used in reference to those verses of previous Scriptures which contained prophecies about the Quran and which have seen their fulfilment in the Quranic verses. Secondly, according to some commentators, God had with Him the complete Book written beforehand and it was out of that Heavenly Book that He revealed verses from time to time. The reference in the pronoun تلك is thus to the original Book with God. Thirdly, other commentators say that this particle has been used to denote the remoteness of the Quran in respect of its high rank. The use of the particle تلك is thus meant to express the great eminence of the verses of the Quran.

Besides the above explanations, there is yet another one, more obvious and better. In the verse that follows, the words, *Is it a matter of wonder for men that We have inspired a man from among them,* have been used to represent disbelievers as thinking that it was impossible that God should have chosen from among them a man to whom He should have sent His revelation. The pronoun تلك is meant to remove this misgiving of disbelievers, who are told that the thing which they consider to be so remote and impossible has actually come to pass. This meaning is supported by another verse of the Quran which says, *They think it to be far off, but We know it to be nigh* (70:7, 8.). The expression, *full of wisdom,* further points out that,

3. [a]Is it a matter of wonder for men that We have inspired a man from among them, *saying*, 'Warn mankind and give glad tidings to those who believe that they have a true rank *of honour* with their Lord?' The disbelievers say, 'Surely, this is a manifest enchanter.'[1278]

اَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا اَنْ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى رَجُلٍ
مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ اَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا
اَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ
الْكٰفِرُوْنَ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ③

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[a] 7:64, 70; 50:3

not only is there no improbability or strangeness in God's revelation being sent to man, but also the seemingly improbable prophecies made in the Quran will certainly be fulfilled in the near future.

The word الحكيم (full of wisdom), for which see 2:130, also points to three distinct qualities of the Quran: (a) that it is full of wisdom, comprising the basis of all spiritual knowledge and inculcating all truths; (b) that it embodies teachings suited to all occasions and all circumstances; and (c) that it gives true judgement in all religious differences.

1278. Important Words:

قدم (rank) is the substantive noun from قدم. They say قدم القوم (*qadama*) i.e. he went before the people or he preceded them; or he took precedence of them; or he led them so as to set an example; قدم البلد (*qadima*) means, he came to or arrived at the town. قدمه على غيره (*qaddama-hū*) means, he gave him precedence over another in time, place or rank; he preferred him to another or honoured or esteemed him above another. The expression لزيد عند بكر قدم means, there is strength or rank or good footing for Zaid, with Bakr. They say فلان على قدم عظيم i.e. such a one is on an excellent footing or foundation. فلان على قدم فلان means, such a one is the successor of such a one (literally, such a one treads in the footsteps of such a one). قدم means, the human foot; precedence, or preference; rank, footing or foundation (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

It is generally believed that the occasion for the revelation of this verse was when disbelievers taunted that God could find no one better to act as His Messenger than the orphan boy of Abū Ṭālib. Though no great value can be attached to this or that incident as being the cause of the revelation of a particular verse, the incident referred to above at least throws some light on the treatment which the Meccans meted out to the Holy Prophet and the contempt in which he was held by them after he had laid claim to prophethood. To call the Holy Prophet the orphan boy of Abū Ṭālib, who was his uncle and guardian, and not to call him after his own father, was intended to insinuate that a man who was the son of an unnamable person and who had been brought up by another could not be worthy of a Messenger of God.

The verse also brings to light the important fact that those who become morally depraved lose all sense of self-respect as well as all confidence in themselves, for here the disbelievers are represented as looking upon themselves as being so degenerate that they could not think that anyone from among them could come and rescue them from the morass of degradation into which they had fallen and that only someone from outside could reform them. This tragic fact also holds good in the case of present-day Muslims. They, too, are anxiously waiting for Jesus to come down from the heaven to take them out of the slough of despair and degradation and are refusing to accept the heavenly Reformer whom God raised from among themselves to lead them to moral perfection and spiritual glory.

The words, *give glad tidings to those who believe that they have a true rank of honour with their Lord,* embody a promise that whoever acts upon the teachings of the Holy Prophet will achieve all kinds of prosperity and glory. This was another cause of surprise for disbelievers. According to them, the followers of the Holy Prophet lacked those qualities that go to make a people great and prosperous. They, therefore, wondered how Muslims dared hope to succeed in their great aim of destroying the old order of things and building on its ashes a new and better order. The words, *with their Lord*, signify that Muslims would make not only moral and spiritual but also material progress. By referring to their connection with a Being Who has the power to bestow all forms of advancement, the Quran alludes to the complete glory and many-sided success of Muslims.

The words, *Surely, this is a manifest enchante*r, signify that when disbelievers heard the above announcement, they said that Muḥammad had succeeded in representing falsehood as truth, because he knew how to take advantage of the weakness of man. He had inspired the cowardly with fear and had held out false hopes to the greedy, and had thus managed to bring people over to his side. This is the very criticism which is levelled at the Holy Prophet by modern Christian writers. They also allege that Muḥammad converted the ignorant Arabs to his faith by threatening with punishment those of them who disbelieved and tempting those who were credulous and greedy with promises of bliss and happiness. If that was indeed a stratagem, where is the religion which does not promise Heaven to its believers and Hell to disbelievers? If speaking of blessings—which are the inevitable result of accepting truth—be called tempting a people with false promises, then no religion is safe from the charge of holding out such temptation. And what will Christian critics say of Jesus, who promised the

4. [a]Verily, your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then [b]He settled Himself on the Throne; [c]He governs everything. [d]There is no intercessor *with Him* save after His permission. That is Allah, your Lord, so worship Him. Will you not, then, be admonished?**1279**

اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى
عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ۭ مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ
اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ
فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ④

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[a]7:55; 11:8; 25:60; 32:5. [b]13:3; 20:6. [c]32:6. [d]2:256.

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keys of Paradise to Peter and to his other followers and threatened disbelievers with deprivation of the kingdom of God? (Matt. 16:15-19; 18:3 & 19:28, 29).

1279. Important Words:

عرش (Throne). See under 7:55.

يدبر (He governs) is derived from دبر (*dabbara*) which again is derived from دبر (*dabara*). They say دبره i.e. he followed behind his back or he simply followed him with respect to time, place or rank. دبر الامر (*dabbara*) means, (1) he considered the issues or results of the affair or the case; (2) he performed or executed the affair with thought or consideration; (3) he devised or planned the affair; (4) he governed, managed, conducted or regulated the affair (Lane, Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In the verse under comment, the word ايام (periods), of which the singular is يوم, does not refer to the period which is determined by the rising and setting of the sun, for the obvious reason that the verse speaks of a time when the sun had not yet come into existence. The word is used here in the sense of time absolutely (see 1:4). Many eminent authorities (e.g. Mujāhid, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and Ibn ‘Abbās) have held that here يوم (period) stands for a thousand years (see Kathīr & Ma‘ānī, under 7:55). They have drawn this inference from 22:48 where a day is spoken of as equal to a thousand years. They are certainly right in holding that the word يوم in this verse does not denote the period of time determined by the rotation of the earth, but they are not right in holding that it stands here for a thousand years, for according to the Quran there is also a يوم (period) which is equal to fifty thousand years (70:5). If we compute the period of six days by this standard, it will mean that the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed in 300,000 years. But we cannot presume that God has disclosed to us the extent of all His days. If some of God’s days extend over a thousand years, and others over fifty thousand years, there may be still others which extend over millions or billions of years. Science has discovered the fact that it took the heavens and the earth millions of years to be evolved into their present shape. A vision of the eminent Muslim scholar Muhy-ud-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī also leads to a similar conclusion (see under 2:31). Hence, the truth is that we cannot determine with certainty the length of the "six days" during which the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed. All that we can say is that God brings about different changes in different periods, some taking a thousand years, others fifty thousand years, and yet others even longer periods, but that, taken all together, the creation of heavens and earth was completed in six periods. See also 7:55.

It will be invariably seen that when a certain verse of the Quran is found liable to objection, the very next verse or passage provides an answer to that objection. Often the question is not mentioned and only the answer is given. These answers serve as a link between what passes in the mind of the reader and the contents of the Quran. Thus the reader finds that as soon as a question arises in his mind, he is given the answer there and then. Those who are not acquainted with this psychological trait of the Quran are inclined to say that there exists no order or arrangement in the Quranic verses, while the fault is all their own, for they do not care to ponder over the Quranic verses. The verse under comment answers a question that arises from the previous verse. That question is, how can Muslims prosper when there are no outward signs of their prosperity? In fact, the previous verse had given promise of lasting success to Muslims—and that at a time when they enjoyed no peace even in their own homes and were surrounded on all sides by powerful enemies. The objection was bound to arise, how could Muslims prosper in such adverse circumstances, and disbelievers naturally thought that promises about the future prosperity of Muslims were nothing but a delusion and a mirage. This implied objection has been answered in the present verse, in which it is pointed out that signs of future developments need not be visible at the outset, and that in this respect the spiritual system resembles the physical system. So attention is drawn to the creation of the heavens and the earth in six periods, and it is hinted that, if it were necessary for the Divine Word to be fulfilled all at once, then the heavens and the earth should also have come into existence all at once. But the fact is that their creation took six long cycles to become perfect and complete. If the creation of the heavens and the earth out of invisible atoms in a period extending over millions of years does not belie that God is their architect, how can the fact that means for the full expansion of Islam did not come into existence with the very announcement of his mission by the Holy Prophet, show that its triumph is doubtful, or that its foundations have not been laid by God? Divine works are brought about through a perfectly planned system and often have their bases hidden from the human eye.

It appears from this and other verses of the Quran that it is a law of God, working both in the physical and the spiritual world, that all things find their completion and consummation at the seventh stage. They pass through six stages of development and then become perfect and complete at the seventh stage. The movement set on foot by the Holy Prophet was likewise to pass through six stages of development and was to see its completion in the seventh stage and so it actually came to pass (for details and fuller discussion see Tafsīr-e-Kabīr by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, under 10:4).

The words, *then He settled Himself on the Throne*, point to the fact that, just as after the creation of the physical universe, God settled Himself on the Throne and all its affairs began to be conducted through the set laws of nature, so, after the establishment of Islam on earth, all spiritual progress will be attainable only through Islam.

The words, *He governs everything*, have been added to show how God governs the universe and conducts its affairs. Elsewhere the Quran says, *When He decrees a thing He does only say to it, 'Be' and it is* (2:118). These words do not mean that after God ordains a certain thing, it at once comes into being in its full-fledged form and that there is no intervening period between God's decree and the coming into being of the decreed thing in its fully developed form. It only means that when God decrees a thing, nothing can stop its fulfilment. Indeed, God's decree is often fulfilled in subtle ways. The words, *He governs everything*, thus point to the working of the universe and to the means which God uses to fulfil His decree and will. For, as explained under Important Words, تدبیر (governing) gives a number of meanings including consideration or, performance of a thing with a well thought-out and planned regulation.

The word عرش (Throne), for which see 7:55, needs some explanation. On careful consideration of all relevant verses and facts it becomes clear that this word represents the transcendent attributes of God, i.e. such attributes as are not found in any other being and are technically known as صفات تنزیهیة. These attributes are eternal and unchangeable and are manifested through God's other attributes known as صفات تشبیهیة i.e. such attributes as are found more or less in other beings also. The former attributes are said to be the bearers of the عرش (Throne). In 69:18, we read that eight (attributes) shall bear the Throne of the Lord above them on that day. The number "eight" in this verse refers to the eight attributes through which God will manifest Himself on the Day of Judgement, just as He is manifesting Himself through His four attributes (mentioned in 1:2-4) in the present world. These four attributes, which belong to the group of صفات تشبيهية are رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds), الرحمان (Gracious), الرحيم (Merciful) and مالك يوم الدين (Lord of the Day of Judgement). On the Day of Judgement the four corresponding transcendent attributes, i.e. صفات تنزيهية will also come into operation. The صفات تشبيهية may be called attributes of similitude, because these attributes are similar to the attributes manifested by human beings. For instance, as kings display their majesty by seating themselves on their thrones, similarly the glory of God lies in His being the "Lord of the Throne." But on the Day of Judgement, this attribute will manifest its transcendent phase and no other being will bear to God the slightest resemblance in that respect.

Some scholars have erroneously inferred from certain verses of the Quran that عرش (Throne) is something created. This inference, among other verses, is drawn from 69:18, in which angels are represented as "bearing" the Throne of God. It is wrongly considered that, having been represented as being "borne" by angels, the عرش must be something material. But the truth is that the word حمل (bearing) is used not merely to denote the bearing of a material thing in the physical sense but also figuratively. Thus in 33:73 man is spoken of as "bearing" the Law which was offered to him by God as a trust; but the Law of God is not a material thing. The expression only means that man accepted and acted upon the Law of God and thereby helped to bear it aloft by revealing its manifold beauties and excellences. Similarly, the bearing of the عرش (Throne) by angels means only that its true reality is disclosed and manifested through them. It is evident that man cannot understand and realize the transcendent attributes of God except through His attributes of similitude, i.e. such as are manifested in relation to His creatures and are shared by them. Thus the attributes of God as are manifested in relation to His creatures are, as it were, the bearers of His transcendent attributes, which means that the former kind of attributes help man to understand and realize the latter kind of attributes.

Another verse giving rise to the idea that the عرش is created is 23:87, in which God is spoken of as "the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne." It is argued that as God is the رب (Lord) of the عرش (Throne), therefore He must be its Creator, for the word رب (Lord) also means *Creator*. But رب (Lord) does not necessarily mean *Creator*; it also means *Owner* or *Possessor*. So رب العرش would mean "the Possessor or Owner of the Throne." God has been spoken of as ذو الرحمة (the Possessor of mercy) in 18:59. But mercy is an attribute of God and has not been created by Him. The description of God as the Possessor of "mercy" or as the Owner of عرش (Throne) does not therefore imply His creation of either of them.

It may be asked, if the word رب (Lord) has been used in the sense of ذو or صاحب (Owner or Possessor), why has not either of the two latter words been used instead of رب (Lord)? The answer is that the use of the word رب fulfils an additional purpose. Some philosophers look upon God only as the First Cause. According to them, the attributes of God are working spontaneously and automatically and are not subject to the will of God. The Quran has, therefore, used the word رب (Lord) in relation to عرش in order to show that the attributes of God do not work involuntarily but according to His will, for the word رب conveys the idea of control coupled with ownership.

Another verse from which it has been erroneously inferred that the عرش is something created is 11:8. It has been argued that as in that verse عرش is spoken of as "being on water", which is a created element, therefore it must itself be something created. But it must be remembered that the word "water" in 11:8 does not mean material water. The عرش (Throne) could not be said to have been resting on water before the creation of the heavens and the earth, for water forms part of the earth and evidently could not have existed before the creation of the latter. Again, for a material throne to be represented as resting on the surface of water after the creation of the heavens and the earth appears to be quite absurd. Moreover, as all words of the Wise God are full of deep wisdom, what possible purpose can be served by the mention of a thing which does not, in any way, concern or interest us? The disclosure that the Throne of God rested on water does not even reveal the glory or majesty of God, because we are kept in the dark as to the nature and reality of this resting of the Throne on water. So neither does "water" here mean material water nor does "Throne" mean a material throne. In fact, "water" in the language of revealed Scriptures often means the word of God. In this sense, the verse would signify that the Throne of God rests on the word of God, which means that it is beyond man fully to comprehend and realize the majesty and glory of God except with the help of His word.

That the عرش really represents the transcendent attributes of God is also clear from 23:117, where we read: *There is no God but He, the Lord of the Exalted Throne*. These words show that the "Unity of God" and "His Exalted Throne" are intimately connected, for it is the transcendent attributes of God which constitute the real proof of Divine Unity. It requires a good deal of reasoning to convince a person of ordinary intelligence of Divine Unity by means of the other attributes which are shared by man in different degrees.

In the words, *There is no intercessor with Him save after His permission*, some light is thrown on the subject of intercession which has been dealt with at some length in 2:49 and 2:256. Suffice it here to say that the word شفیع (intercessor) is derived from شفع which means the connecting or the joining together of two like things. In view of this meaning, it would be wrong to say that belief in intercession can in any way encourage a sinner to sink deeper in sin. Nothing is farther from the Islamic conception of شفاعة

5. [a]To Him shall you all return. The promise of Allah is true. Surely, [b]He originates the creation; then He reproduces it, that He may reward those who believe and do good works, with equity; and *as for* those who disbelieve, they shall have a drink of boiling water, and a painful punishment, because they disbelieved.1280

اِلَیۡهِ مَرۡجِعُکُمۡ جَمِیۡعًا ؕ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ؕ
اِنَّهٗ یَبۡدَؤُا الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ یُعِیۡدُهٗ لِیَجۡزِیَ
الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ بِالۡقِسۡطِ ؕ
وَالَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لَهُمۡ شَرَابٌ مِّنۡ حَمِیۡمٍ
وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌۢ بِمَا کَانُوۡا یَکۡفُرُوۡنَ ۝

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[a]6:165; 11:5; 21:94; 39:8. [b]10:35; 27:65; 29:20; 30:12, 28.

(intercession) than this baseless notion. According to Islamic teaching only those good people who lack a requisite number of good works to make them heirs to the grace and mercy of God but who, at the same time, have a true spiritual connection with His Prophet can avail themselves of intercession; and not those habitual sinners who deliberately break the commandments of God and have no true connection with His Prophet.

1280. Commentary:

The purpose for which man has been created is that he should attain nearness to God. It is to this fact that the words, *The promise of Allah is true*, refer; and we are told that at last all men will attain nearness to God and thus will be fulfilled the real object for which man has been created.

In the words, *He originates the creation, then He reproduces it,* the reproduction spoken of refers firstly, to the fact that, after death, man will be given a new life in which his actions in this life will be rewarded; and, secondly, that even in the present life one generation of men will succeed another so that the good deeds of a preceding generation may not be wasted and may benefit their successors.

The word صالحات (good) which, besides meaning good and righteous, also means proper and suitable to the occasion (see 2:26), points to a great secret of individual as well as national progress. It is not only good works that lead to the material and moral well-being of individuals and communities but deeds done at suitable occasions conforming to the exigencies of time and circumstances are also essential. The present-day degradation of Muslims supplies an apt through tragic illustration of the neglect of this hard truth. At a time when strong intellectual effort was needed, Muslim divines confined their attention to mere outward acts of religious devotion and neglected other activities which were equally

6. [a]He it is Who made the sun *radiate* a brilliant light and the moon *reflect* a lustre, and ordained for it stages, that [b]you might know the number of years and the reckoning *of time*. Allah has not created this but in truth. He details the Signs for a people who have knowledge.**1281**

هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّ الْقَمَرَ
نُوْرًا وَّقَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ
وَالْحِسَابَ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ
يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٦

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[a]25:62; 71:17. [b]17:13

essential for the advancement of the community. It was their duty to inspire Muslims with a passion for work, to make them active and energetic, to improve their standard of morality, to induce them to attain proficiency in modern sciences, and to teach them how to work in collaboration with others in matters of common interest. But they failed to do so, with the result that their religious devotions alone could not save them. It is mostly by صالحات i.e. good works done in conformity with the exigencies of occasion and circumstances, that nations rise and prosper. Muslims ignored this immutable divine law and came to grief.

For an explanation of حميم (boiling water) see under 6:71.

1281. Important Words:

ضياء (brilliant light) is the substantive noun from ضاء i.e. it became bright. اضاءت النار means, the fire burned brightly or, transitively, the fire lit up (the surroundings, etc.). ضياء means, light; bright or brilliant light. It is synonymous with نور though, according to some, it has a more intensive signification than نور. Some lexicologists consider ضوء or ضياء as signifying the rays that are diffused by what is termed نور. According to others these two words are synonymous in their original application but ضوء or ضياء is more forcible according to usage. According to yet others ضوء or ضياء signifies that light which subsists by itself, as that of the sun or fire, and نور that which subsists by some other thing as does the light of the moon i.e. reflected light (Lane & Aqrab). The truth appears to be that whereas ضياء or ضوء signifies strong light, نور is a more general term denoting light as opposed to darkness. This is why نور is one of the names of God. نور is also more extensive and more penetrating as well as more lasting in its significance (Muḥīṭ).

Commentary:

The verse points to a very wise natural law. We can judge the amount of space traversed by a body only by the change of its position relative to

7. Verily, [a]in the alternation of night and day, and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth there are Signs for a God-fearing people.[1282]

اِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ
اللّٰهُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَّتَّقُوْنَ ۝٧

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[a]2:165; 3:191; 23:81.

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other bodies. So this verse purports to say that God has appointed stages for the sun and the moon that we may be able to make a reckoning of time. In other words, He has caused these heavenly bodies to move and has appointed stages for their motion so that by observing the motion of these bodies we may be able to know that a certain amount of time has passed and that we have moved on from our original position. All reckoning and all calendars depend on the movements of the sun and the moon. The moon moves round the earth and thereby we are able to know the measure of months. The earth moves round the sun and also rotates on its own axis, thus enabling us to measure our years as well as our days. The Arabic words rendered here as, *that you might know the number of years and the reckoning of time*, may also be translated as "that you might know the number of years and the principles of mathematics." In fact all fundamental principles and basic rules of mathematics are based on and derived from the movements of heavenly bodies like the sun and the moon.

The verse is also pregnant with a deep spiritual import. Just as in the physical world the sun and the moon enable us to prepare our calendars and make a right estimate of our works and their results, similarly through the suns and moons of the spiritual universe, i.e. the Prophets, we can measure the value of our labour and its results. Without the Prophets of God there can be no true awakening and no realization of the spiritual progress made by man, just as without the sun and the moon it would be impossible to form an idea about time or to measure it. The Prophets of God are like the sun and the moon in the spiritual world. They reveal the capacity for spiritual progress that lies latent in human nature and make men understand and realize their inborn faculties and capabilities and the limitless field of spiritual progress that lies before them. Without Prophets, there could be no real spiritual progress in the world.

The words بالحق (in truth) signify that God has not created the heavens and the earth only to satisfy a caprice. He has created them to fulfil an eternal and noble object. The Prophets and Messengers of God are as much needed for the spiritual growth of man as are the sun and moon for that of the physical world.

1282. Commentary:

In the present verse the words, *for a God-fearing people*, have been

8. [a]Those who look not for the meeting with Us and are content with the life of this world and feel at rest therewith, and those who are heedless of Our Signs—**1283**

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا وَرَضُوْا
بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَاَنُّوْا بِهَا وَالَّذِيْنَ
هُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا غٰفِلُوْنَ ۙ٨

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[a] 10:12, 46; 25:22.

substituted for the expression, *for a people who have knowledge*, occurring in the previous verse. This has been done because though the natural phenomenon of the alternation of day and night is known even to the most ignorant person, it is only the God-fearing that derive real spiritual benefit from a reverent study of it. Similarly, the ordaining of various stages for the moon and the sun, of which the previous verse spoke, was not so easy a thing as to be perceived and understood by each and every person and therefore only those endowed with knowledge could benefit from it. Hence it is that where the Quran speaks of the alternation of day and night, it uses the words "God-fearing people"; and where it refers to the stages of the moon and the sun it uses the words "a people who have knowledge".

The phenomenon of the alternation of day and night continues without interruption. Day is followed by night and night by day. This phenomenon resembles the rise and fall of nations. The days of their glory and prosperity are followed by the nights of their decline and degradation. No nation has ever enjoyed perpetual glory, nor has any people forever floundered and groped in the darkness of degradation and decline. But the analogy must not be too far stretched, for the verse does not speak of the "length" of days and nights but only of their "alternation". A people may make their day of prosperity long and shorten their night of decline. So let no people delude themselves with the idea that, because periods of light and darkness or, for that matter, of prosperity and decline, must follow one another, therefore, if they are overtaken by spiritual night it is only inevitable and that soon the day will dawn. For the night may become long or even too long. Similarly, it is in the power of man to postpone the coming of the night. Indeed, although nations are subject to the law of growth and decay, this does not mean that they should make no effort to check and arrest the process of decay and retrieve their lost prosperity. By implication the Meccans are told in this verse that God has caused the day of glory to dawn upon them through the Holy Prophet and it is now for them to work out their destiny and carve a bright future for themselves while it is yet day and before the darkness of night again overtakes them.

1283. Important Words:

يرجون (look for) is derived from رجا which has two contrary meanings i.e.

9. It is these whose abode is Fire, because of what they earned.**1284**

اُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ⑨

(1) he hoped, and (2) he feared. They say رجوته I hoped for him or it; and مارجوتك i.e. I feared not thee (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is a characteristic of the style of the Quran that it uses words and expressions that are apparently simple but embody a vast variety of meanings. As the Arabic language is most adapted to serve this purpose, God has bestowed upon it the honour of being the language of the Quran. رجا (looking for) is one such word and means both hope and fear. The use of this word in the present verse has therefore made it rich with deep meaning.

The study of human nature reveals the important fact that all human progress is bound up with the instincts of hope and fear. Our best efforts are inspired by one or other of these two instincts. Some persons labour and sweat, actuated by hopes of acquisition and aggrandizement; others work out of fear lest they should come to grief. The present verse contains an appeal to both classes. To those for whom the incentive to work is hope, the verse says, "Why don’t you hope to meet God and shape your conduct according to, and in anticipation of, that meeting; because on the hope of that meeting depends all your material prosperity as well as your moral and spiritual advancement." To those whom fear alone can incite to action, it says, "Why don’t you fear and try to escape God’s punishment which, if it overtakes you, will destroy you outright." Thus in one single word the Quran has exhorted to action both and, for that matter, all classes of men.

In the words, *are content with the life of this world and feel at rest therewith*, is beautifully given the Islamic point of view with regard to material progress. Islam is not opposed to the search for, or attainment of, material prosperity. What it disapproves is that one should make the acquisition of the things of this world the aim and end of one’s existence and should have no thought for the Hereafter. Secondly, Islam disapproves the idea that after one has attained prosperity, one should give up all further effort at making still more progress. As a matter of fact, the good of the Hereafter, coupled with material prosperity, is spoken of in the Quran as one of the favours of God and every Muslim is exhorted to pray for it (2:202).

The words, *those who are heedless of Our Signs*, throw further light on the subject, viz. that God is displeased with only those who are wholly engrossed in the pursuit of material things and consign all spiritual things to oblivion.

1284. Commentary:

The verse uses the words يكسبون (they earn) and not يعملون (they do) to

10. But as for those [a]who believe, and do good works,—their Lord shall guide them because of their faith. Rivers shall flow beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss.**1285**

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
يَهۡدِيۡهِمۡ رَبُّهُمۡ بِاِيۡمَانِهِمۡ‌ۚ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ
تَحۡتِهِمُ الۡاَنۡهٰرُ فِىۡ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيۡمِ ۝١٠

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[a] 2:278; 4:176; 13:30; 14:24; 22:15, 24.

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point to the philosophy of sin. Only a wrongful act done deliberately or repeatedly deserves to be punished. He is not a sinner, delaying punishment, who in a state of passing forgetfulness and with no deliberate intention is guilty of a temporary moral lapse, nor is that person a sinner in the true sense of the word who falters and commits a sin but is immediately after seized with sincere remorse and repents of his action, and at once sets about mending his conduct. The subject has also been dealt with in 53:33.

Speaking of the punishment of sinners, the verse says, *It is these whose abode is Fire*. The word ماوى (abode) is used to signify a place which a person repairs to for lodging and which he looks upon as a refuge and an asylum (see 79:42). It seems strange that "Fire" should be spoken of as a refuge and an asylum, but the Quran has used this word in order to point to the real significance and true nature and purpose of Divine punishment, which is that the punishment of God is not meant to inflict pain but to heal. According to Islam, Hell is not a place of torture but a sort of reformatory or hospital. And just as a man, though disliking the pain caused by a surgical operation, submits to it gladly because he sees his own good in it. Similarly when sinners come to realize the real purpose of Divine punishment, they will look upon it as a place of refuge, i.e. a means of deliverance from the real punishment which is the displeasure of God and estrangement from Him. Thus, by using the word ماوى (abode) with regard to the fire of Hell the Quran means to point out that it is not with the intent of torture but a necessary means of purification.

1285. Commentary:

The words, *their Lord shall guide them*, show that true guidance is achieved only through true faith. Mere actions are of no value, unless they are accompanied by the purification of the heart. The man who has a mind to steal but who finds no opportunity to do so cannot be called honest. Similarly, if a person’s heart is inspired by fear of anyone other than Allah, even though he does not outwardly worship them, he cannot be called a true worshipper of God. But it would be wrong to infer from this that Islam attaches no importance to the doing of good

11. Their prayer therein shall be, ‘Glory be to Thee, O Allah!’ and [a]their greeting therein shall be, ‘Peace.’ And the conclusion of their prayer shall be, ‘All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’**1286**

دَعْوٰىهُمْ فِيْهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيْهَا سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ⑪ ع

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[a] 14:24; 36:59.

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actions and holds "faith" to be sufficient. What Islam emphasizes is that good works should be accompanied by faith, which is another name for the purification of the heart. It is impossible for a man with a pure heart to fail to do good works. The heart of man is beyond all external control. His actions can be controlled, but not his heart; God has, therefore, made guidance dependent on something which is entirely in one’s own power and totally beyond the control of others. So, by adding the words, *because of their faith*, the Quran alludes to the fact that a man’s actions will be rewarded according to the degree of his faith. The deeds of two persons may be equal and analogous to all outward appearance, but their rewards may be entirely different according to the measure of the faith, sincerity and love which inspire their actions. This is indeed a point worth remembering.

The word تحت (beneath) is also used figuratively, denoting subordination. Taken in this sense, the expression, *beneath them*, would signify that the inmates of Heaven will be masters and owners of its rivers and not merely their users as tenants or occupiers. It may also be incidentally noted here that the word تحت (beneath) is also used as a noun meaning a person of low status and poor origin. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said,

لاتقوم الساعة حتى تظهر التحوت وتهلك الوعول

i.e. "the Hour of Resurrection will not come until those belonging to the poor and labouring class shall prevail and the rich classes shall perish," which means that the truth of the Promised Messiah whose time has been stated as marking the approach of the "Hour of Resurrection," shall not prevail unless workers and labourers have ascendency over the rich and wealthy (Tāj under the word تحت). This prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled by the rise of the labour class in most countries, particularly in Soviet Russia.

1286. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that on having been endowed with the rewards of Heaven and on experiencing its supreme bliss, the believers will at once cry out, *Glory be to Thee, O Allah*. This glorification will be spontaneous and instinctive, because in Heaven the true reality of things will become manifest to all.

R. 2.

12. [a]And if Allah were to hasten for men the ill *they have earned* as they would hasten on the *acquisition of* wealth, *the end of* their term *of life* would have been already brought upon them. But [b]We leave those who look not for the meeting with Us to wander distractedly in their transgression.**1287**

وَلَوۡ يُعَجِّلُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسۡتِعۡجَالَهُمۡ
بِالۡخَيۡرِ لَقُضِيَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ اَجَلُهُمۡ ؕ فَنَذَرُ
الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَرۡجُوۡنَ لِقَآءَنَا فِيۡ طُغۡيَانِهِمۡ
يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

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[a]17:12. [b]See 10:8.

Even in this life a true believer praises and glorifies God whenever he sees a praiseworthy thing, the inward reality of which he does not know. He does so because he knows that no work of God is devoid of wisdom. But in Heaven, the reality of all things will become apparent to man. He will come to realize on the basis of his personal observation and experience that every work of God is founded in deep wisdom. The realization of this eternal truth will make him exclaim instinctively and involuntarily, *Glory be to Thee, o Allah.*

The verse proceeds to say that believers in Heaven will salute each other with the greeting of peace. In fact, all our sufferings (i.e. lack of peace) in this world are due to our ignorance of the true reality and properties of things and, as these will be disclosed to us in Heaven, we shall attain there complete and real peace, for we shall then become secure against all harm by knowing the true properties of all things and will get complete freedom from pain and suffering. Hence, after glorifying God on learning the realities of things and experiencing the complete bliss of Heaven, believers will go about exclaiming, "There is peace here, nothing but peace", for, after attaining perfect knowledge of things, they will no longer suffer by making wrong use of them.

Finally, when believers will see perfect peace reigning in Heaven and will have vented their happy feelings to one another, they will turn again to God and the conclusion of their prayer will be, "All praise be to Allah, Who has placed us in such a place of perfect bliss."

1287. Important Words:

الخیر (wealth) is a common Arabic word giving among others the following meanings: (1) good, moral or physical, actual or potential; (2) a thing that all desire, being profitable or useful; (3) wealth or property; (4) good fortune, happiness or prosperity (Lane).

13. And [a]when trouble befalls a man, he calls on Us, lying on his side, or sitting, or standing; but when We have removed his trouble from him, he goes his way as though he had never called on Us for the *removal of the* trouble that befell him. Thus it is that the doings of the

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْبِهٖٓ
أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَآئِمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ
ضُرَّهٗ مَرَّ كَأَنْ لَّمْ يَدْعُنَآ إِلٰى ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهٗ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾

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[a]30:34; 39:9, 50.

Commentary:

Some difference of opinion exists among commentators as to the meaning of the first part of this verse. This difference has arisen owing to the word خير (wealth) being misconstrued as "good" or "virtue", which it does not always mean. The word خير as shown under Important Words, also means wealth or property, and it is in this sense that it has been used in the present verse. The verse thus means that disbelievers have directed all their energies to the earning of wealth and have altogether neglected God. Their conduct demands that evil should overtake them. But God is slow to punish. If He had been as quick in punishing as their conduct deserves, they would have been destroyed long ago. But God gives people respite to repent and mend their ways. If, however, the word خير be taken in the sense of "good", then the pronoun هم in the expression استعجالهم would be taken as the object of the word استعجال and not as the subject, and in this case the verse would mean that if God had been as quick to inflict punishment as He is to bestow good, then they would already have been destroyed; but God, being Forgiving and Merciful, gives them time to repent.

The words, *But We leave those who look not for the meeting with Us to wander distractedly in their transgression*, do not mean that God desires to leave the transgressors in their transgression, but that, in spite of their transgression, He grants them respite so that they may not die in a state of transgression but may have a chance to correct themselves and escape punishment.

As already pointed out in 10:4 above, the Quran sometimes omits to mention a question and only indirectly alludes to it by giving the answer. Thus this verse shows that 10:4 was a reply to the demand of the disbelievers for a speedy decision. All these verses therefore occur in a perfectly natural order and contain a reply to an implied question.

extravagant are given a fair appearance in their eyes.[1288]

1288. Important Words:

مسرفين (the extravagant) is the plural of مسرف which is the active participle from اسرف which again is derived from سرف meaning, he was ignorant; or he was unmindful or heedless. سرف الطعام means, the wheat or food became cankered or eaten away. اسرف means, he exceeded or transgressed the just or right limit or measure; he acted extravagantly or immoderately. They say فلان اسرف فى ماله meaning, such a one was hasty in respect of his property i.e. he expended his property extravagantly without keeping within proper bounds. اسرف فى القتل means, he exceeded the due bounds or just limits in slaying. اسراف, which is the noun-infinitive from اسرف, also signifies the committing of many faults, offences, or crimes and sins. مسرف means, one exceeding or transgressing the right limit or measure; one acting extravagantly; one unmindful, negligent or heedless; one denying or disacknowledging the favours or benefits or the Unity or the Prophets or the Law of God; a disbeliever or an unbeliever (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse describes the different attitudes which a man assumes when he is stricken with distress. Sometimes the blow is so hard that he falls to the ground. This state is described in the words, *lying on his side*. Again, sometimes distress renders a man restless and uneasy. This state is described in the words, *sitting or standing*, because the constant changing of posture is a sure sign of restlessness.

The verse means that, although disbelievers continue to demand that if the Prophet of Islam is really sent by God, they should be visited with punishment for their rejection of him, yet when Divine punishment actually overtakes them, they are seized with despair. It thus embodies two important lessons. The first is that we should not be hasty in attacking the motives of other people, because the verse clearly says that the disbelievers do not commit evil deeds deliberately, knowing them to be so, but only do what appears good in their eyes, i.e. their evil deeds are the result of faulty reasoning and defective vision. It may be asked here, why then will disbelievers be punished for doing what appears good in their eyes. The answer to that question is that the verse does not say that the evil deeds of each and every individual appear good in his sight but that it is only to the extravagant that they so appear. The offence of the disbelievers lies in the fact that they become extravagant, and so they justly deserve to suffer the consequences of an extravagant life.

The second important lesson contained in this verse is that the plea of good motives is not always acceptable and therefore it cannot always save a person from the consequences of his actions. It is only

14. And [a]We destroyed the generations before you when they did wrong: and there came to them their Messengers with clear Signs, but they would not believe. Thus do We requite the guilty people.[1289]

وَلَقَدۡ اَهۡلَکۡنَا الۡقُرُوۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِکُمۡ لَمَّا
ظَلَمُوۡا ۙ وَ جَآءَتۡہُمۡ رُسُلُہُمۡ بِالۡبَیِّنٰتِ
وَ مَا کَانُوۡا لِیُؤۡمِنُوۡا ؕ کَذٰلِکَ نَجۡزِی
الۡقَوۡمَ الۡمُجۡرِمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

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[a] 6:7; 20:129; 21:12.

when the motives themselves become vitiated on account of corrupt living or when it is in our power to rectify our motives but we fail to do so, that we become deserving of punishment. In the law of nature, as against the law of Sharī'ah, motives count for nothing, the consequences being invariably determined by the nature of one's actions. He who takes a fatal dose of poison must die, no matter what his motives are and no matter what kind of life he leads. But in the law of Sharī'ah due allowance is made for the circumstances in which a certain deed is done and for the motives that prompt it.

1289. Important Words:

القرون (the generations) is the plural of القرن which gives a number of meanings: (1) part or division of time; (2) people of one time; (3) a generation coming after another; (4) a people that is destroyed so as to leave no remnant behind it; a century (Aqrab and Lane).

Commentary:

This verse brings to light some eternal divine truths. One is that it is always a life of wrongdoing i.e. the contravention of the law of nature or that of Sharī'ah that brings about the downfall and destruction of a people. The entire history of the world bears eloquent testimony to this great truth. The other divine law hinted at in this verse is that Divine punishment does not overtake a people unless a Prophet of God first appears among them to warn them of their evil ways and of the Divine punishment that will come upon them, if they do not follow him and give up their wicked practices. Thus it is the mercy of God and not His punishment that is meant to be emphasized in this verse, because we are told that when God sees that a certain people have made themselves deserving of His punishment on account of their evil lives, He, out of His great mercy, sends to them a Prophet so that they may follow him and, by reforming themselves, escape the impending punishment and become heirs to His favours. It is only when they reject the Divine Messenger and instead of mending their ways, begin to persecute him that God sends down punishment on them.

Punishments again are of two kinds: (1) those that are the result of contravention of the laws of nature,

15. Then, [a]We made you *their* successors in the earth after them, that We might see how you would act.[1290]

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝١٥

[a]2:31; 7:130.

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and (2) those that come when the law of Sharī'ah is flouted. The latter class of punishments never occur unless a people begin to lead wicked lives and unless a Prophet is first made to appear among them. Punishments of this kind are known by certain characteristics. For instance, (*a*) their occurrence is generally foretold by previous announcements based on Divine revelation; (*b*) they assume the form of an unusual and extraordinary upheaval in nature such as a succession of earthquakes or the widespread outbreak of virulent epidemics; and (*c*) they occur after a Warner has made his appearance. The other class of punishments, such as the rise and fall of nations from natural causes, are due only to the contravention of the ordinary laws of nature. These must always be distinguished from the first-mentioned class of punishments.

1290. Important Words:

خلائف (successors) is the plural of خليفة which is the active participle from خلف. They say خلفه i.e. he came after, succeeded or remained after him. خليفة means, a successor; a vicegerent or deputy; one appointed to take the place of another who has been before him (Lane). See also 2:31; 7:70 & 7:170.

Commentary:

The verse gives rise to a natural question, viz. when a people is made to succeed another people only when the former is superior to the latter who have met with a merited downfall, what is the significance of the words, *that We might see how you would act?* The answer to this question is that good works are of two kinds: (1) those that bring about and lead to the glory of a people; and (2) those that are needed to maintain that glory. There are people who acquit themselves excellently in the acquisition of greatness but, once they have attained it they fail to maintain a high standard of national morality and fall victim to sloth and lack of discipline. Moreover, the works of a people are further divided into two more categories. Some actions are virtuous by themselves, while others serve only as a basis for, and help to maintain, good deeds. By adding the clause, *that We might see how you would act*, the Quran means to say that God made you heirs to His favours on account of such of your initial good deeds as were needed to merit greatness, and now He will see how you do those deeds which guard and perpetuate your good actions. The truth is that the latter kind of good deeds are far more difficult to perform than the former. One of the

16. And when Our clear Signs are recited unto them, [a]those who look not for the meeting with Us say, [b]'Bring a Quran other than this or change it.' Say, 'It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only [c]follow what is revealed to me. Indeed, I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of an awful day.'[1291]

وَاِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِمۡ اٰیَاتُنَا بَیِّنٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِیۡنَ
لَا یَرۡجُوۡنَ لِقَآءَنَا ائۡتِ بِقُرۡاٰنٍ غَیۡرِ ہٰذَاۤ
اَوۡ بَدِّلۡہُ ؕ قُلۡ مَا یَکُوۡنُ لِیۡۤ اَنۡ اُبَدِّلَہٗ مِنۡ
تِلۡقَآیِٔ نَفۡسِیۡ ۚ اِنۡ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا یُوۡحٰۤی
اِلَیَّ ۚ اِنِّیۡۤ اَخَافُ اِنۡ عَصَیۡتُ رَبِّیۡ
عَذَابَ یَوۡمٍ عَظِیۡمٍ ﴿۱۶﴾

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[a]See 10:8. [b]17:74. [c]6:51; 7:204; 46:10.

principal causes of the decline of nations is that, while they are ready to undergo all sorts of sacrifices in order to attain honour and greatness, they do not make similar efforts to preserve and perpetuate the same willingness for sacrifice and the same love for righteousness among their posterity. The result is that with the passing of one or more deserving generations the process of decay and degeneration sets in, till at last the doomed nation falls into the abyss of ruin and destruction.

If Muslims had borne this great truth in mind, they would not have sunk to their present degradation. If even now they hearken to the voice of God and His Messenger and act upon the great truth embodied in this verse, they may yet regain their lost glory.

1291. Important Words:

تلقاء (accord) is derived from لقی. They say لقیه i.e. he came face to face with him; he found or met him. توجه تلقاء النار means, he went in the direction of the fire, or towards the fire. جلس تلقاء فلان means, he sat facing him or opposite to him. فعله من تلقاء نفسه means, he did it himself; he did it of his own accord, i.e. without being led to it by someone else or without being forced to do it (Aqrab).

Commentary:

Signs (آیات) are of two kinds: (1) simple signs, and (2) clear or manifest signs. To the first class belong all things, even the smallest atom of the universe, because every one of these things points to the existence of a Creator, though it is our own faculty of reasoning that draws the inference that every created thing must have a Creator. But the signs shown at the hands of Prophets speak for themselves. They are shown to establish the truth of things hidden from our eyes, viz. the existence of God, the Day of Resurrection, the truth of the Prophets, and the nature of Divine attributes. As these signs serve as evidence for matters that concern belief, they have been spoken of as آيات بينات (clear signs), while the Signs from nature are spoken of simply as آيات (signs). All pestilences, for example, are آيات while a pestilence predicted by a Prophet of God to prove the truth of his claim is آية بينة i.e. a clear and manifest sign, for such a pestilence serves its purpose much more clearly and definitely than a general one.

The words, *those who look not for the meeting with Us say, Bring a Quran other than this or change it*, show that when the leaders of disbelief saw that the hearts of their followers were becoming gradually inclined towards the truth and they were beginning to accept the new faith, they became anxious and, in order to incite their followers against the Prophet, assumed the garb of peacemakers. As men naturally love peace, the leaders of disbelief exploit this natural human desire and suggest a compromise, viz. that the Prophet should introduce no new teaching but should only assume the leadership of the people which would maintain the homogeneity of the community and save it from discord or dissension. If, however, this proposal should not meet with the Prophet's acceptance, he should at least omit from his teachings such portions as offend against the cherished ideas of the people. When making these proposals, the ringleaders know full well that the Prophet would never accede to these unreasonable demands, which cut at the very root of his divine mission, and that in this way the people would come to think that he was too narrow-minded to give up even some of his ideas for the sake of national unity and concord. Thus they think they would succeed in making the people ignore the important fact that truth and the acceptance of a Divine Call were much more precious than mere patched-up unity and that the decline of nations was always due to the denial of divine truth. In reply to these demands of his opponents the Holy Prophet is commanded to say in this verse that he could not change a teaching which was revealed by God and which was the only means of their regeneration, for such change, instead of proving useful, was sure to prove ruinous.

The expression "of my own accord" occurring in the words, *It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me*, contains a subtle hint that Divine teachings are always in accordance with the condition of the people for whom they are sent, and hence nobody can change them of his own accord. If the Holy Prophet should himself change the teachings revealed to him, it would lead to the ruin of the people because Divine teachings, being in fitness of prevailing circumstances, can alone bring about a real spiritual and moral reformation among people and any change in these teachings would certainly be not to their good. The words, *Bring a Quran other than this or change it*, may also refer to the prophecies of punishment and destruction contained in the Quran. Disbelievers naturally did not like these prophecies and wanted them to be changed. The

17. Say, ‘If Allah had *so* willed, I should not have recited it to you nor would He have made it

قُلْ لَّوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ
اَدْرٰىكُمْ بِهٖ ۖ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّنْ

verse tells them that they could have these warnings changed only if they changed their own condition, because if a change takes place in them, the nature of the warnings would automatically change.

The words, *I only follow what is revealed to me*, may also mean, "In respect of the Quran I follow nothing but what is revealed to me" i.e. not only are all the words of the Quran divine but its divisions into verses and *Sūrahs* as well as the arrangement thereof are also divine. Incidentally this also does away with the objection raised by certain critics of Islam that the opening verse of each *Sūrah*, viz. بسم الله was not of Divine origin but was placed there by the Prophet himself.

Some Christian writers pretend to see this verse as an effort by the Holy Prophet to justify the alleged abrogation of certain verses of the Quran. By the words, *It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me*, the Holy Prophet is supposed by these writers to have disclaimed all responsibility for abrogation in the Quran. But this assumption is absurd. Far from justifying abrogation, the verse shows that not a single verse of the Quran has ever been abrogated. When disbelievers demanded that the Holy Prophet should make some alteration in the Quran, they did not mean that they would accept it after the demanded changes had been made. Their object in making such a demand was that, if the Holy Prophet agreed to make any change in the Quran, in compliance with their demand, they would at once say that it was not the word of God but his own composition which he altered at will to meet their wishes. But if he refused to accede to their demand, they would get a ready tool to incite the masses against him, condemning him as one who had no regard for national peace and harmony. Christian writers seem to forget the fact that if, as alleged by them, certain verses of the Quran had already been replaced by others, disbelievers had no need to resort to the above device, but could justify their objection on the basis of the abrogation that had already taken place in the Quran and could seize on it as evidence of the Quran not being the word of God. Thus the verse under comment incidentally furnishes evidence that there has been no abrogation in the Quran.

The words, *the punishment of an awful day,* signify a national disaster. The words mean that the teachings which are revealed by God are for the good of the people themselves and it is on acting upon them that all progress depends. So, if any change is made in these teachings, it is sure to prove detrimental to the best interests of the entire people.

قَبۡلِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ⑰

known to you. I have indeed lived among you a *whole* lifetime before this. Will you not then understand?'[1292]

1292. Commentary:

The argument against the abrogation theory which was begun in the previous verse is continued in the present one. Such commandments may be abrogated as are needed only for a particular time, the commandments changing with the change of circumstances. But, if any commandments were to be changed without any change having taken place in the circumstances of men, then it would be a proof of the fact that such commandments were misplaced and their promulgation quite useless.

It is regarding this fact that the Holy Prophet is made to say to the disbelievers "If the teachings given by me had not been useful and some other teachings had been more adapted to bring about a change in you, then I would not have delivered these teachings to you, neither would God have revealed them to me."

The words, *I have indeed lived among you a whole lifetime before this. Will you not then understand*?, embody a great criterion to test the truth of a claimant to prophethood. The Holy Prophet is here asked to refer disbelievers to the period of life he had already passed among them as proof of his sincerity and the truth of his claims. If the period of his life before he claimed to be a Prophet had presented an extraordinarily high standard of truthfulness and integrity and between that period and his claim to prophethood there was no interval during which it might be supposed that he had fallen from that high standard of moral excellence, his claim to prophethood must be accepted as coming from a highly moral and truthful man. When even the Prophet's opponents admitted that all his lifetime he had been a singularly upright man and had even won from them the title of *al-Amīn* (the Trustworthy) on account of his unimpeachable integrity, he could not suddenly turn an impostor. How was it possible that one who was the most upright and righteous of men a day before should have become a hardened liar the next day (for there is no greater liar than he who forges lies about God). Naturally a person confirmed in a certain course of conduct through habit or temperament takes a long time to develop in himself a major change for either good or evil. How then could the Prophet of Islam suddenly turn into an impostor? There never was a time when the Prophet's life was hidden from the gaze of his compatriots. He was a resident of Mecca, belonged to a well-known Meccan tribe, and was popularly known in the city as الامين (the Truthful). In view of these established historical facts, the Quran, as it were, says to the disbelievers, "You ascribe to Our Messenger the most heinous

18. [a]Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or *he* who treats His Signs as lies? Surely, the guilty ones shall never prosper.**1293**

فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰی عَلَی اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا
اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾

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[a]6:22; 11:19; 61:8.

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of all lies, viz. forging lies against God, but you cannot produce any evidence to show when this change for the worse developed in him. On the contrary, you admit that right up to the time when he claimed to be a Prophet, he continued to live among you day and night; and you looked upon him as an exceptionally righteous and truthful man. How then can you now say that all of a sudden he has begun to forge lies against God?"

The words, *before this*, are intended to point to the great psychological fact that the objections of the Holy Prophet's enemies after he laid claim to prophethood should carry no weight with right-thinking people, because it always happens that after a person has announced himself to be a Messenger of God, people naturally turn against him and begin to impute to him all sorts of evil things. The fact that the Emperor Heraclius asked of Abū Sufyān, when the latter was brought before him at Jerusalem, what his people thought of the Prophet *before* he laid claim to prophethood, also shows that he too had realized the force of this great argument.

The words, *Will you not then understand*?, draw our attention to the established psychological truth that a sudden change does not come upon a man except either (1) through some physical injury, etc. (for instance when a man happens to receive a blow on the head causing loss of memory or change in manners, etc.) or (2) through some great spiritual influence. History provides instances when a great shock or calamity has made a person give way to despair and thereby inclined him to evil or when the discovery of some great truth has created a sudden change in him for good. A study of the life history of the Holy Prophet shows that he had never been subject to either of these two influences. Before his exaltation to prophethood, he led a life of retirement, giving himself up to prayer and meditation. At the same time he had not despaired of his countrymen but, like a true well-wisher, earnestly worked for their good. In such circumstances it is an insult to human reason and to all known laws of human psychology to say that though before he claimed to be a Messenger of God the Prophet of Islam was a model of piety and righteousness, yet the very day he made that claim he became the greatest of liars.

For a discussion of the "illiteracy" of the Holy Prophet see under 7:158.

1293. Commentary:

This verse brings to light two

19. [a]And they worship, instead of Allah, that which neither harms them nor profits them; and they say, ‘These are our intercessors with Allah.’ Say, [b]‘Would you inform Allah of something He knows not in the heavens or in the earth?’ Holy is He, and high exalted above *all* that which they associate *with Him.*[1294]

وَ يَعۡبُدُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمۡ
وَ لَا يَنۡفَعُهُمۡ وَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ
شُفَعَآؤُنَا عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلۡ اَتُنَبِّـُٔوۡنَ اللّٰهَ بِمَا
لَا يَعۡلَمُ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ لَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ
سُبۡحٰنَهٗ وَ تَعٰلٰی عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾

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[a]16:74; 22:72; 29:18. [b]49:17.

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eternal truths. The first of these is that both those who fabricate lies against God and those who reject and oppose His Messengers are highly unjust and can never escape God’s punishment. The second is that impostors and false prophets cannot succeed in fulfilling the object of their mission. It is indeed possible that a false prophet may temporarily succeed in securing a number of followers or in amassing wealth. But even in this case he will not be regarded as having succeeded in fulfilling his mission, because the amassing of wealth or the securing of a number of followers has never been the mission of a Prophet of God. The true mission of a Divine Messenger is either to introduce and establish a new Law or to strengthen the old one, and unless he succeeds in achieving this object, he cannot be said to have been successful in his mission. This is a criterion the truth of which cannot legitimately be disputed or denied. The apparent failure of a true Prophet like John the Baptist or the apparent success of a claimant like Bahā’ullāh can be fully explained with the help of this touchstone. John came with the mission of announcing the coming of the Messiah, which was in the nature of strengthening the old Law, and he was successful in that mission. On the other hand, Bahā’ullāh, even if he be taken to have come only as a Divine Messenger and not as God’s incarnation as he declared himself to be, claimed to have brought a new law that was to replace the Quranic Dispensation and therein he utterly failed, for his law has not been truly established even in a single household, not to speak of a whole people or country.

1294. Commentary:

The real cause of *shirk* (idolatry) lies in failure on the part of men to understand the object and purpose of their creation. A *mushrik* (idolater) has a false conception of the person and attributes of God and of his own

20. And [a]mankind were but one community, then they differed *among themselves*; [b]and had it not been for a word that had gone before from thy Lord, it would have *already* been judged between them concerning that in which they differed.**1295**

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّآ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً
فَاخْتَلَفُوْا ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ
رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْمَا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ٢٠

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[a]2:214. [b]11:111; 20:130; 41:46.

great inborn capacities and capabilities. He entertains the foolish belief that he cannot have access to God without the aid of an intermediary, and also that God cannot condescend to come to him except through the medium of those who have already attained His nearness. Islam is opposed to both these views. It does not allow us to entertain any such suspicion about God, nor does it permit us to underrate our own natural powers. God has created man that he may attain His nearness and He does not tolerate that anyone should intervene between Him and His creatures. Even the Prophets of God are not intermediaries. They are only Divine Messengers and Warners, and their intercession is also based on Divine sanction. See also 2:49.

The expression, *Would you inform Allah of something He knows not,* contains an excellent refutation of *shirk* (idolatry). It purports to say that if God had appointed anyone as intercessor either in the heavens or in the earth, a declaration would have been made by Him to that effect. But no such announcement has ever been made by God. It is the people themselves who declare that such and such a person has been appointed as an intercessor, and so they, as it were, inform God of something which He does not know.

The words, *Holy is He,* are meant to point out that it is incompatible with the perfection of God that He should first create man for a certain purpose and then should Himself place obstacles in his way, or should reveal no guidance to warn him of those obstacles.

1295. Commentary:

The expression, *And mankind were but one community, then they differed among themselves* has three meanings: (1) That God caused men to follow the one true path in the beginning of creation but then they deviated from it. God not only endowed man with the capacity to find the right path but also directed him to it through revealed guidance; but man forsook that path and fell into error. (2) That they are being always and continuously shown the right path

21. And they say, [a]‘Why has not a Sign been sent down to him from his Lord?’ Say, ‘The unseen belongs only to Allah. So wait; I am with you among those who wait.’ **1296**

وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْلَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ ءَايَةٌ مِّن
رَّبِّهِۦ ۚ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا ٱلْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ فَٱنتَظِرُوٓا۟ ۚ
إِنِّى مَعَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْمُنتَظِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ ٢ ع ٧

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[a] 6:38.

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through Divine Messengers but then differences arise among them. God sends someone as His Messenger among them and, through him brings them to the path of truth but again they begin to differ. (3) That in their opposition to the Divine Messenger disbelievers always take the same course and thus form one community. All through the ages people have opposed the Prophets and have differed and disagreed with them.

The latter part of the verse points out that if God had not laid it down as a law that He always sends a Prophet before punishing the wicked, or that He has created mankind for guidance and spiritual progress, He would have quickly punished evildoers and destroyed all of them.

1296. Commentary:

It is the invariable practice of the opponents of the Prophets of God to accuse them of having brought no sign. In spite of the fact that this *Sūrah* opens with the words, *These are the verses* (lit. *signs*) *of the Book that is full of wisdom*, the Holy Prophet’s opponents charged him with having shown no sign. This shows that it is not given to everybody to see and realize heavenly signs. Only those who possess spiritual eyes can see them.

It should be remembered that whenever disbelievers demand a sign, they mean a sign in the form of "Divine punishment," except when the words used by them clearly refer to something else. In the verse under comment too the word means Divine punishment.

Another important point that emerges from this verse is that it is not necessary that the time of the fulfilment of a prophecy should be defined and announced beforehand. If it had been necessary to do so, the Quran would not have said that God alone knew the time when Divine punishment would come and that people should wait for it even as the Prophet does.

The words, *I am with you among those who wait*, contain a beautiful reply to the disbelievers’ demand for the coming of a speedy punishment. The Holy Prophet is made to say to disbelievers that it is he and not they who should have been impatient at the delay in the coming of the threatened punishment; for it is he who is being subjected to mocking for this delay and when he is patiently waiting for God’s decree, why should not they?

R. 3.

22. [a]And when We make people taste of mercy after adversity has touched them, behold, [b]they begin to plan against Our Signs. Say, 'Allah is swifter in planning.' Surely, Our messengers write down all that you plan.[1297]

وَاِذَآ اَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ
مَسَّتْهُمْ اِذَا لَهُمْ مَّكْرٌ فِيْٓ اٰيَاتِنَا ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ
اَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا ؕ اِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُوْنَ مَا
تَمْكُرُوْنَ ۝٢٢

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[a]30:37; 41:51, 52; 42:49. [b]8:31; 35:44.

1297. Important Words:

مكر (plan) is the infinitive noun from the verb مكر (*makara*) which means, he practised deceit, guile or circumvention secretly; he practised an evasion, an artifice, a trick, an expedient or device; he planned or plotted. مكربه means, he did him harm or mischief clandestinely. مكره الله means, God requited him for his practising deceit, etc. مكر is praiseworthy or otherwise according to its object (Lane).

Commentary:

In v. 20 it was said that as God had created men that He might show them mercy, so He was merciful to them. In v. 21 it was said that people demanded punishment, but God deferred and delayed the sending down of punishment that they might have time to repent. The present verse says that not only does God always delay His punishment, but when at last He sends it, He does so intermittently and piecemeal in order that the disbelievers may realize that the punishment was due to their opposing His Prophet and may desist from their evil course and thus save themselves. But the wicked take no warning and do not benefit by it. They only show some fear when they are being actually visited with punishment but, as soon as there is an abatement or remission, they revert to their evil course. The verse points out that God's decree can come into operation at once, even before the evil machinations of the disbelievers take effect but out of His boundless mercy He purposely delays His punishment because, being All-Powerful, He knows He can punish them whenever He likes and, being All-Knowing, there is no likelihood of His forgetting the evil deeds of disbelievers.

It may be asked why it is that sometimes when the punishment of God occurs, some righteous people also suffer along with the wicked. The answer to this question is that man is a social animal and he influences and is in turn influenced by his environment. As such, he is bound to partake of the joys and sorrows of those among whom he lives. This is the reason why the

23. He it is Who enables you to journey through land and sea until, [a]when you are on *board* the ships and they sail with them with a fair breeze and they rejoice in it, there overtakes them (the ships) a violent wind and the waves come on them from every side and they think that they are encompassed, *then* they call upon Allah, purifying *their* religion for Him, *saying*, 'If Thou deliver us from this, we will surely be of the thankful.'**1298**

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ
حَتّٰۤى اِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ ۚ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ
بِرِيْحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَّفَرِحُوْا بِهَا جَآءَتْهَا رِيْحٌ
عَاصِفٌ وَّجَآءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ
مَكَانٍ وَّظَنُّوْۤا اَنَّهُمْ اُحِيْطَ بِهِمْ ۙ دَعَوُا
اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ۬ لَئِنْ اَنْجَيْتَنَا
مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

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[a] 17:67; 29:66; 31:33.

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righteous sometimes suffer along with the wicked, and also why Divine punishment is often deferred so that the few good of heart may benefit from that postponement.

It will be noted that whereas in the verse God ascribes the bestowal of "mercy" to Himself, no such mention is made with regard to "adversity." This is to point out that whereas mercy comes from God, adversity is the result of man's own evil actions.

1298. Important Words:

عاصف (violent) is the active participle from عصف. They say عصفت الريح i.e. the wind blew violently or vehemently. عصفت الناقة براكبها means, the she-camel went quickly with her rider, as if she were the wind. عصف الدهر بهم means, the time destroyed them. عصف الزرع means, he cut the corn before its attaining maturity. ريح عاصف means, wind blowing violently or vehemently. يوم عاصف means, a day violent in respect of wind and storm (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that on the part of God the system of punishing and showing mercy goes hand in hand, as does on the part of disbelievers the habit of acting wickedly in time of ease and repenting temporarily when punishment overtakes them. But disbelievers always ignore the fact that, just as a pleasant breeze sometimes develops into a violent gale and causes widespread destruction, similarly, the remission that is granted to them may prove the prelude to their destruction. To bring home to disbelievers this patent truth, their attention is drawn to the comforts and perils of a sea-voyage.

24. But [a]when He has delivered them, lo! they begin to commit excesses in the earth wrongfully. O ye men, [b]your excesses are only against your own selves. *Have* the enjoyment of the present life. Then to Us shall be your return; and We will inform you of what you used to do.**1299**

فَلَمَّآ اَنۡجٰهُمۡ اِذَا هُمۡ يَبۡغُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ
بِغَيۡرِ الۡحَـقِّ ؕ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَا بَغۡيُكُمۡ
عَلٰٓى اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ ۙ مَّتَاعَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۖ ثُمَّ
اِلَيۡنَا مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ
تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

25. [c]The likeness of the present life is only as water which We send down from the clouds,

اِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ مِنَ
السَّمَآءِ فَاخۡتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الۡاَرۡضِ مِمَّا يَاۡكُلُ

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[a]17:68; 31:33. [b]35:44. [c]18:46.

It is worthy of note that whereas the verse uses the pronoun "you" in the second person in the first two clauses, it suddenly changes to a pronoun of the third person (them, they) in the third and the following clauses. This is not without purpose. The first two clauses referred to both believers and disbelievers, for it is both for believers and disbelievers that God has provided the means of travel by land and sea. Hence the pronoun "you" has been used in the first two clauses. But as in the following clauses it has been pointed out that a section of the people become ungrateful, therefore here the second person has been changed into the third person, in order to show that it is only disbelievers that become ungrateful.

1299. Commentary:

As stated in the preceding verse, disbelievers temporarily mend their ways when they are seized with punishment but, as the present verse points out, they revert to the paths of transgression and iniquity when the punishment passes away, forgetting that their acts of transgression will only tell against themselves. The words, *your excesses are only against your own selves,* point out that the Law is not a curse but a mercy of God, sent down for the well-being of mankind. Therefore, he who defies or infringes the Law, only harms himself.

The words, *Have the enjoyment of the present life,* are intended to signify that even the rejecters of truth may have temporary benefits and may even "enjoy" their state of rejection just as a diseased person temporarily enjoys the things forbidden him. But the result is always disastrous.

النَّاسُ وَالْاَنْعَامُ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَاۤ اَخَذَتِ
الْاَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّیَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ
اَهْلُهَاۤ اَنَّهُمْ قٰدِرُوْنَ عَلَیْهَاۤ ۙ اَتٰىهَاۤ
اَمْرُنَا لَیْلًا اَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنٰهَا حَصِیْدًا
كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالْاَمْسِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ
الْاٰیٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ یَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾

then there mingles with it the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat till, when the earth receives its ornature and looks beautiful and its owners think that they have power over it, [a]there comes to it Our command by night or by day and We render it a field that is mown down, as if [b]nothing had existed there the day before. Thus do We expound the Signs for a people who reflect.[1300]

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[a]3:118. [b]11:69.

1300. Important Words:

حصيدا (a field that is mown down) is derived from حصد meaning, he reaped or cut with the scythe seed-produce or plants or herbage. They say حصدهم بالسيف i.e. he mowed them down with the sword; he slew them; he exerted his utmost power or exceeded ordinary bounds in slaying them; he exterminated them with the sword. The Arab proverb من زرع الشر حصد الندامة means, he who sows evil reaps regret. حصيد means, reaped seed-produce; grain that is reaped; seed-produce torn up and carried away by the wind; slain or mown down with the sword, like seed-produce when reaped. حصاد means, time or season of reaping; what remains on the ground after the crop has been reaped; what falls off and becomes scattered of the seed-produce (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The life of this world has been likened here to rainwater. The verse purports to say that when rain descends from heaven, it causes various kinds of vegetation to grow. Some of them are useful for man and others for animals. But man, instead of ascribing this to the favour of God, looks upon it as the fruit of his own industry and skill. When, however, in consequence of his pride and vanity, a sudden visitation from God destroys all the produce of the earth, he cannot prevent or delay its destruction, let alone possess the power to produce it which he so vaingloriously claimed to have. The moral of the parable is that when nations become proud and vain, i.e. when they take life lightly, their decline sets in and they come to grief.

Water in this verse may also be taken to stand for the word of God. In this sense, the verse would mean that the word of God brings about mighty changes in the life of those who

26. [a]And Allah calls to the abode of peace, and guides whom He pleases to the straight path.**1301**

وَاللّٰهُ يَدۡعُوۡۤا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ ؕ وَيَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ
يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۲۶﴾

27. [b]For those who do good deeds, there shall be the best *reward* and *yet* more *blessings*. And [c]neither darkness nor ignominy shall cover their faces. It is these who are the

لِلَّذِيۡنَ اَحۡسَنُوا الۡحُسۡنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ ؕ وَلَا
يَرۡهَقُ وُجُوۡهَهُمۡ قَتَرٌ وَّلَا ذِلَّةٌ ؕ اُولٰٓـئِكَ
اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَـنَّةِ ۚ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

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[a]6:128. [b]50:36. [c]75:23, 24.

accept and follow it and various new sciences come into existence as a result of its study and new discoveries are made in the material as well as in the spiritual world. The revelation of the Quran gave birth not only to highly spiritual and righteous men but also to eminent philosophers and scientists. But when Muslims became vain and refused to acknowledge their debt to the word of God and began to look upon themselves as the real originators and creators of all these sciences, they fell from the high pedestal of material and spiritual glory to the depths of degradation and degeneration.

1301. Important Words:

سلام (peace) is the noun-infinitive from سلم which means, he was or became safe or secure; he escaped; he was or became free. They say سلم من الافات او العيب i.e. he became safe, secure or free from evils of any kind or from fault, defect, imperfection, blemish or vice. سلام therefore means, safety, security, immunity or freedom from faults or from defects, imperfections, blemishes or vices; or simply safety, security, immunity or freedom; peace; obedience; Heaven. It is also one of the names of God (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:209 & 3:20.

Commentary:

As shown under Important Words, the word سلام means, peace, obedience, Heaven and God. Therefore the words, *Allah calls to the abode of peace*, will mean also that (1) God lays down obedience as a characteristic of believers; and (2) God makes believers heirs to the blessings of Heaven; and (3) God places true believers in a position from where they see God face to face.

The words, *and guides whom He pleases to the straight path*, here mean that there is a special class of people whom God attracts to Himself by the shortest route because a "straight path" is necessarily the shortest. This class comprises the Prophets and other chosen ones of God.

inmates of Heaven; therein shall they abide.[1302]

28. And *as for* those who do evil deeds, [a]the punishment of an evil shall be the like thereof, and [b]ignominy shall cover them. They shall have none to protect them against Allah. *And they shall look* as if their faces had been covered with dark patches of night. It is these who are the inmates of Fire; therein shall they abide.[1303]

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ جَزَآءُ سَيِّئَةٍۭ
بِمِثْلِهَا ۙ وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ
اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ كَاَنَّمَاۤ اُغْشِيَتْ
وُجُوْهُهُمْ قِطَعًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

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[a]42:41. [b]68:44; 75:25; 80:41, 42; 88:3, 4.

1302. Important Words:

الحسنى (the best reward) is derived from حسن which means, he became good, beautiful or pleasing. الحسنى is the feminine of الاحسن and means, that which is better or best; the good ultimate state or condition appointed for the Faithful; Paradise; victory; sharpness or keenness or activeness (Aqrab & Lane). See also 7:181.

يرهق (shall cover) is derived from رهق. They say رهقه i.e. he or it covered him, or came upon him or reached or overtook him or drew near to him. The expression لایرھق وجوھھم قتر means, there shall not come upon or overspread their faces blackness, or darkness. رھقتنا الصلوة means, the time of Prayer came upon us (Lane).

قتر (darkness) is derived from قتر (*qatara*) which means, (1) it (meat, etc.) exhaled its scent, smell or odour; (2) it was barely sufficient. They say, قترت النار i.e. the fire smoked. قتر علیه رزقه means, his means of subsistence were straitened or made scanty. قتر (*qatarun*) means, dust, the dust of an army; a dust-colour overspread with blackness; blackness or darkness. قتر (*qatrun*) means what is barely sufficient to sustain life (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Since the word الحسنى means, a happy end, victory, keenness and activeness, the Arabic clause rendered as, *For those who do good deeds there shall be the best reward*, would mean that believers will come to a happy end; that they will attain success, and that God will make them keen and active.

The word زیادة (yet more) signifies that believers will have God Himself as their reward, the word الحسنى (also meaning the view or vision of God) confirming that inference.

1303. Important Words:

عاصم (One who protects) is the

29. And *remember* the day [a]when We shall gather them all together, then shall We say to those who ascribed partners *to God*, "*Stand back in* your places, you and your 'partners'". Then We shall separate them widely one from another, and their 'partners' will say: [b]'*Surely*, it was not us that you worshipped.1304

وَيَوۡمَ نَحۡشُرُهُمۡ جَمِيۡعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوۡلُ لِلَّذِيۡنَ
اَشۡرَكُوۡا مَكَانَكُمۡ اَنۡتُمۡ وَشُرَكَآؤُكُمۡ ۚ
فَزَيَّلۡنَا بَيۡنَهُمۡ وَقَالَ شُرَكَآؤُهُمۡ
مَّا كُنۡتُمۡ اِيَّانَا تَعۡبُدُوۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

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[a]6:23; 46:7. [b]16:87; 28:64.

active participle from عصم which means, he or it prevented or hindered; or he defended or protected or he or it preserved or kept. عصمه الله من المكروه means, God protected him from evil. اعتصم بالله means, he held fast to God. اعتصم means, he defended or preserved himself; or he refrained or abstained. عصمة means, protection from that which causes destruction of man; faculty of avoiding acts of disobedience with possession of power to commit them; inability to disobey. عصمة النكاح (plural عصم) means, the tie or bond of marriage. عاصم means, defender. The Quranic expression, لا عاصم اليوم من امر الله means, there is no defender this day from the decree of God; or there is no possessor of defence this day (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse embodies several important truths: (a) whereas the reward of good is manifold, the reward of evil is only the like thereof; (b) those who break the law of God cease to be inspired by high ideals and great ambitions. They become mere imitators of others, losing all initiative and never aspiring to be the leaders of men; (c) having thus fallen and incurred the displeasure of God, they forfeit His assistance, which is so necessary to raise them from the depths of degradation into which they sink; (d) the iniquities and transgressions of evildoers cannot long remain hidden but sooner or later become exposed and known to the world.

1304. Important Words:

مكانكم (Stand back in your places). See 6:136. شركاءكم (your partners). This expression does not mean, "those who share your attributes or your power or wealth." It simply means, "the partners or deities you associate with God." So is the case with the expression شركاء هم (their partners).

زيلنا (We shall separate them widely)

30. So Allah is *now* sufficient as a Witness between us and you. [a]We were certainly unaware of your worship.'**1305**

فَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًۢا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اِنْ
كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

31. [b]There shall every soul realize what it shall have sent on before. And they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master, and all that they used to forge will be lost to them.**1306**

هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوْا كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّآ اَسْلَفَتْ
وَرُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ وَضَلَّ
عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ ع ٣ ٨ النصف

R. 4.

32. Say, [c]'Who provides sustenance for you from the

قُلْ مَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ

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[a]46:6. [b]86:10. [c]27:65; 34:25; 35:4.

is from زال. They say زاله or ازاله i.e. he put it or set it apart or away; he removed or separated it. ما زال زيد قائما means, Zaid ceased not or continued to be standing. زيل (*zayyala*) gives the same meaning as زال but in a more intensified sense. زيله means, he separated it (a party or company of men, etc.) much or greatly or widely (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse speaks of those alleged "partners" whom people set up as equals to God without their knowledge or desire or sanction, e.g., the angels, or Prophets or saints such as Rama, Jesus, etc. The next verse supports this inference in which it is clearly stated that these "partners" will call God to witness that they were utterly ignorant of the fact that they had been set up as equals to, or co-partners with Him. The verse further points out that idolaters possessed no evidence for the allegation that the Prophets and saints of the past favoured their deification.

1305. Commentary:

This verse clarifies and supports the interpretation put on the preceding verse.

1306. Important Words:

تبلوا (shall realize) is derived from بلا. They say بلاه i.e. he tried or proved or tested him with something good or evil; he knew it or became acquainted with it. بلوته also means, I smelt it (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse implies that it is not given to man to fully comprehend and realize the reality and details of everything in this world. It is only in the next world that the veil shall be completely lifted from all things and their real nature will come to light and judgement will be pronounced regarding all matters by God Who is the real Master of all creation.

heaven and the earth? Or who is it that has power over the ears and the eyes? And [a]who brings forth the living from the dead and brings the dead out of the living? And [b]who governs all affairs?’ They will say, ‘Allah’. Then say, ‘Will you not then seek *His* protection?’**1307**

اَمَّنْ يَّمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ
يُّخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ
مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُّدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ؕ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
اللّٰهُ ۚ فَقُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾

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[a]3:28; 6:96. [b]See 10:4.

1307. Commentary:

This verse explains in a beautiful manner the relation between Divine revelation and human reason. It says that all physical or spiritual sustenance is provided by heaven and earth acting in concert. Neither of them can do it singly. For example, if heaven should continue to send down rain but the earth should lack the necessary power and capacity for bringing forth vegetation, the rain would produce nothing. On the other hand, if no rain falls, then the fertility of the soil alone will not suffice to produce vegetation. Exactly in the same way human reason, which is like soil, cannot produce spiritual vegetation, which serves as spiritual food for man, unless the water of Divine revelation comes to its aid from heaven. It is, therefore, vain to hope that man can attain to God by the help of reason alone, without the aid of Divine revelation.

The verse proceeds to say that it is foolish to think that God should have given eyes and ears to men but should have failed to provide for them the task they were meant to perform. That task is provided through Divine guidance. Similarly, the verse draws our attention to the process of life and death in this world. Oftentimes the living come out of the dead and things which to all outward appearance are dead begin to show signs of life and vice versa. Is it not then possible that there should sometimes gush forth a fountain of life from a dead heart? When such a possibility exists, why should not God grant respite to the sinful so that such of them as possess the germs of life may revive?

The verse continues the argument in the words, *And who governs all affairs*?, meaning that it is inconceivable that a being who is entrusted with the conduct of an affair should himself seek to destroy it. No wise man can ever think of undoing his own handiwork. How then can God wish to destroy the universe which is the means for the manifestation of His powers and attributes? He would much rather save it than destroy it. This is why He is slow in punishing.

33. Such is Allah your true Lord. So what *would you have* after *discarding* the truth except error? How then are you being turned away *from the truth*?**1308**

فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ ۖۚ فَاَنّٰى تُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

There exists an extremely beautiful and intelligent order in this verse. It begins with a reference to sustenance, which is the means of the preservation of life. Then it speaks of the organs of sight and hearing, which are the means of acquiring wisdom and knowledge. After that the verse speaks of the system of life and death, pointing to man's power of action which naturally comes into operation after the acquirement of wisdom and understanding. Last of all, it speaks of the government or management of affairs which is needed when one begins to exercise the power of action, for تدبیر means, conducting an affair in an ordered and regulated manner and maintaining proper balance between different acts. In short, all the four means which are needed for the achievement of the purpose of man's existence have been mentioned here in their natural order. Now can there be a being so unreasonable as to first create life and endow man with feelings and the necessary capabilities for work and also provide a well-regulated order in his actions, and then, having endowed him with all these gifts, leave him alone and give him no instructions to employ these great gifts for the attainment of a particular object? A man with even a grain of sense can see that such a thing is impossible. And it is equally impossible that, after having done all this, God should be hasty in bringing about destruction or awarding punishment.

Sometimes even Christian commentators of the Quran feel constrained to admire the beauty and force of its teachings. Commenting on this and the following few verses, the Rev. E.M. Wherry says: "This passage contains very cogent reasoning against idolaters. These teachings account for much of the success of Islam as a missionary religion." It is a pity, however, that even in the face of such admissions some Christian writers should have the hardihood to ascribe the success of Islam to the sword and the so-called "temptations" which Islam is alleged to have offered to its followers.

1308. Commentary:

The words ربکم الحق (your true Lord) point to the perfection of man after going through a gradual process of evolution, a subject referred to in the previous verse. This is hinted in the word رب which means, One Who brings things to a state of perfection by degrees. By qualifying the word رب (Lord) by the adjective الحق (true), which means, necessarily existing by his own essence or really existing (Lane), the verse is intended to point to the fact that there are two kinds of

34. [a]Thus is the word of thy Lord proved true against those who rebel, that they believe not.[1309]

كَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. Say, ‘Is there any of your associate-gods [b]who originates creation and then reproduces it?’ Say, ‘It is Allah *alone* Who originates creation and then reproduces it. Whither then are you turned away?’[1310]

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

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[a] 10:97; 40:7. [b] See 10:5.

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rabbs (lords): (1) those that are not everlasting and are subject to the law of decay and death, their nourishing being temporary and imperfect; (2) He Who is necessarily existing and is free from death. This is Allah, Who is not only our *Rabb* but is also Eternal and Everlasting. His bringing up of man is therefore perfect and free from all limitations and lost indeed is the man who abandons Him and has recourse to other lords and masters.

1309. Commentary:

The verse points to the natural law that he who rebels against the authority of God and defies His Prophets is deprived of opportunities to believe.

1310. Commentary:

The real test of a creator is his ability to reproduce what he has once created; otherwise the claim is open to serious objection and can be made by anyone. The verse under comment thus contains an incontrovertible argument against polytheism, viz. that a creator is one who is able to reproduce his creation. In fact, not only creation but reproduction or repetition thereof is the true test of divinity, because, firstly, it is the only infallible proof of God’s being the Creator, and secondly, because it provides the basis of the actual working of the universe. After having laid down this test of divinity, the Quran asks idol-worshippers, who among their so-called deities is the author of this system of creation and reproduction which has been working from the beginning?

It is also clear from this verse that when God had brought into existence a consummate and unending system of creation, He could not have, after having given guidance to a certain generation, deprived the succeeding generations of it. He Who originated creation and continued the system of reproduction could not possibly make such an invidious distinction between one generation and another.

36. Say, ‘Is there any of your associate-gods who leads to the truth?’ Say, ‘It is Allah Who leads to the truth. Is then He Who leads to the truth more worthy to be followed or he who finds not the way *himself* unless he be guided? What, then, is the matter with you? How judge ye?’[1311]

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى
الْحَقِّ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ لِلْحَقِّ ؕ اَفَمَنْ
يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّتَّبَعَ اَمَّنْ لَّا
يَهِدِّيْٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّهْدٰى ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ قف
كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾

37. [a]And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely,

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ اِلَّا ظَنًّا ؕ اِنَّ الظَّنَّ

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[a] 6:117; 10:67; 53:29.

1311. Important Words:

يهدى *yahiddī* (finds the way himself) which is really يهتدى (from اهتدى i.e. he found or followed the right way) is the intransitive form of هدى which means, he directed him aright or caused him to take or follow the right way. يهدى (which is really يهتدى, the letter تا having been merged into the letter د) means, he became rightly directed; he followed or found the right way; he went aright (Lane).

Commentary:

The untenability of their position is brought home to idolaters in this verse. The verse asks them the pertinent question: If God does not send guidance, is it their idols who do so? If the latter have ever sent guidance for men, their votaries could say, with some justification, that God might have entrusted the task of guidance to these idols or deities. But the fact is that not a single instance is on record where an idol or a false deity has ever been credited with the sending down of guidance for mankind. It is indeed strange that, whereas idolatry is so rife in the world, there is not a single book on earth which is alleged to have been revealed to any person by any of the false deities. The world has witnessed all sorts of lies invented by men, but nobody has ever dared to forge the lie that such and such a book has been revealed to him by such and such an idol or deity. Now when the sending down of guidance has never been even falsely ascribed to any idol or deity, how can the idolaters, in the face of guidance having been revealed to mankind in all ages, deny that it is God the Almighty Who sends it down for humanity?

The words, *Is then he who leads to the truth more worthy to be followed*, may also refer to the Prophets of God who are sent to guide men to the truth. In this case the latter part of the verse would mean, "who is more worthy to conjecture avails nothing against truth. Verily, Allah is well aware of what they do.[1312]

لَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا
يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾

38. And this Quran is not such as might be devised by anyone except Allah. On the contrary,

وَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ اَنْ يُّفْتَرٰى مِنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ

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be followed, a Prophet of God or the false deities and their votaries who themselves stand in need of guidance and cannot (in opposition to the teaching of the Prophets) offer any revealed teaching?"

1312. Important Words:

الظن (conjecture) is used in different senses: (1) doubt or uncertainty; (2) thought, supposition or conjecture (3) preponderant belief (or strong presumption) with the admission that the contrary may be the case; (4) knowledge or certainty (Lane).

Commentary:

The word ظن which, as stated under Important Words, gives different meanings, is here used in the sense of either "doubt or uncertainty" or "conjecture or supposition," for it cannot be taken in the other two senses, because truth and knowledge never contradict each other nor can there be any real conflict between truth and a strong presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. In that case, it is only ill-based suspicions or false opinions that try to make a stand against truth, for they are not based on reason but spring from waywardness, doubt or weakness of character. The verse means to say that the beliefs and views held by those who set up equals to God are born of mere fancies and surmises, because their so-called deities have never revealed guidance to them.

By using the words, *most of them,* the Quran does not mean that some idolaters possess real grounds for their idolatrous views. The expression has been used to point to the two classes of idolaters. One class consists of those who hold to their idolatrous views merely through greed or bigotry, while in their heart of hearts they know that idolatry possesses no true or reasonable basis. The other class—a large majority—however, sincerely believe in the plurality of gods, though such belief is not based on reason, common sense or observation, but has its origin only in fancy and superstition.

The Quran again teaches a great truth in this verse, viz. that we should not regard all those who hold views different from ours as wilful liars or dishonest persons. Most people sincerely believe their religion to be true, though their beliefs are due to

[a]it fulfils that which is before it and is an exposition of the Law *of God*. There is no doubt about it. *It is* from the Lord of *all* the worlds.**1313**

يَدَيۡهِ وَتَفۡصِيۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ لَا رَيۡبَ فِيۡهِ مِنۡ
رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

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[a]12:112; 16:90.

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the weakness of their intellect or lack of proper thinking. Such people do not make a full and sustained effort to find the truth and are mentally sluggish and indolent.

1313. Commentary:

The previous verse dealt with the subject that it was necessary for God to have sent down revelation for the guidance of mankind and that it is not in the power of anyone else to provide such spiritual guidance. From a discussion of the subject in principle, the Quran in this verse turns to the particular question, whether the Quran could be the word of man. It answers this question in the negative and gives five very cogent reasons to show that it is indeed the revealed word of God.

The first argument hinted at in the words, *except Allah*, is that the Quran comprises such subjects as are beyond the power of man to know and as can be revealed by God alone. Now among the things which are known to God alone are matters which pertain to the unseen, viz. prophecies about great events of the future; and there can be no doubt about the Divine origin of a book which contains things which are known to God alone.

The second argument given here to prove the Divine origin of the Quran is that not only do its own prophecies contradict the idea of its having been forged and fabricated by a man but the prophecies of the previous Prophets also establish its Divine origin. This is hinted at in the words, *it fulfils that which is before it*; and obviously no man-made book has the power to fulfil in itself prophecies foretold in previous Scriptures.

It is a peculiar characteristic of the Quran that, instead of speaking of former Prophets as bearing witness to the truth of the latter Prophets, it represents the latter as fulfilling what the former Prophets have said, the reason being that whereas former Prophets do indeed predict the advent of the Prophets that are to come after them, the latter Prophets establish the truth of the former Prophets by making their appearance exactly at the time and in the manner foretold. The best way of expressing this idea is the one that has been followed by the Quran. For, to say that the former Prophets bear testimony to the truth of such and such a Prophet or of such and such a revelation, is not so effective as to say that it is only by means of the present revelation or the present Prophet that the truth of the former Prophets can now become established. This is a line of reasoning which the followers of the former Prophets dare not reject.

The third argument embodied in this verse is hinted at in the words, *an exposition of the Law*, i.e. the Quran explains and expounds the teachings of previous Scriptures. This also constitutes a very strong proof of the truth of the Quran. The previous Scriptures require the help of the Quran for the exposition and elucidation of their teachings. The Torah, the Gospels, the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, all discuss such great spiritual problems as the Unity of God, revelation, Divine attributes, prophethood, life after death, moral and spiritual conditions, etc., but none of these books deals with these questions in such a manner as to make them perfectly clear and understandable, and their ambiguities and obscurities have to be explained with the help of the Quran. So in the verse under comment the claim is made that the Quran explains and clarifies those parts of previous Scriptures about which so much vagueness and obscurity exists and disbelievers are told that, if they deny the Divine origin of the Quran, they will have to admit that the All-Knowing God Himself was unable to put so much spiritual knowledge in all the former revealed books as this human being (the Prophet of Islam) has succeeded in placing in this small Book, the Quran. So the followers of other faiths will have either to admit the Divine origin of the Quran or deny previous Scriptures also.

The fourth argument given in this verse is contained in the words, *There is no doubt about it*, which means that the Quran contains all the reasons and arguments needed to prove its Divine origin and does not require the help or support of any outside person or book for that purpose. It deals with various social, moral and spiritual problems in such a perfect and exhaustive manner that he who ponders over it dispassionately can readily see that the Quran makes no claim which it does not support with cogent reasons and powerful arguments. This constitutes irrefutable evidence of the fact that this Book has indeed proceeded from God; for the Quran demands our belief in many unseen things and it is not in the power of man to prove unseen things by intellectual reasoning alone without the help of observation and experience. But obviously man cannot provide bases of observation and experience for things unseen. Only God can do it.

The fifth argument of the Divine origin of the Quran as given in this verse is contained in the words, *It is from the Lord of all the worlds*. This is to hint that by means of the Quran the Divine attribute of *Rabbul 'Ālamīn* (Lord of all the worlds) has been made manifest to all mankind. The Quran is not meant to satisfy the need and requirements of a particular people or a particular period only, as were the previous Scriptures, but is meant for all nations and all ages. Now it is impossible for a human being to produce a book which should satisfy the requirements of all mankind for all time. Man is naturally influenced by his environment and

39. Do they say, ‘He has forged it?’ Say, [a]‘Bring then a Sūrah like unto it, and call for help on all you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.’[1314]

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّثْلِهٖ وَادْعُوْا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝۳۹

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[a] 2:24; 11:14; 17:89; 52:34-35.

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ordinarily foresees and seeks to meet his immediate needs only. It is God alone Who can give such teachings as are equally useful for all times and all peoples and as are unaffected by changes in time and in the conditions and circumstances of man. The Quran embodies such teachings.

1314. Commentary:

Notwithstanding the great excellences of the Quran mentioned in the preceding verse, disbelievers had the hardihood to allege that it was a fabrication of the Holy Prophet. The verse under comment asks, if a book with such excellences as the Quran possesses could be a human fabrication, then why do disbelievers not produce a similar one themselves? Similar challenges have been made in the Quran at different places, in different words. At one place the Quran calls upon disbelievers to produce a book like the whole of the Quran; at another it challenges them to produce ten chapters comparable to the Quranic *Sūrahs*; at yet another place it requires them to produce even a single *Sūrah* like those of the Quran. This shows that each of the passages containing these challenges deals with the subject from a different standpoint and offers a different challenge. In the verse under comment, for instance, the pronoun "it" in the expression مثله (like unto it) does not refer to the whole of the Quran but only to the previous verse of the present *Sūrah*. As we have seen, the previous verse has advanced five arguments to show that the Quran is the revealed word of God and in the present verse disbelievers are told that if they still persist in looking upon the Quran as the word of man, then let them produce a book which, let alone all the five arguments embodied in the previous verse, should possess only one of them. It is a patent fact, however, that not one of these five arguments about the Divine origin of the Quran is to be found in any work of man. This is a claim which nobody has ever dared to contradict, nor is there a possibility of future contradiction. The challenge stands for all time. The heavens and the earth may pass away, but no man will ever be able to produce a book like the Quran.

If the word *Sūrah* in this verse be taken to mean a chapter, then the verse would mean that disbelievers are called upon to produce even a chapter comparable with the Quran. But then the challenge will not be so pointed. For, in that case disbelievers would be called upon to bring a full chapter characterized by all the five

40. Nay, [a]but they have rejected that the knowledge of which they did not compass nor has the *true* significance thereof yet come to them. In like manner did those before them reject *the truth*. But see what was the end of those who did wrong![1315]

بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيْطُوْا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَلَمَّا
يَاْتِهِمْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٤٠

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[a] 27:85.

qualities mentioned in the previous verse, while in the other case they are required to produce any composition containing only one of the five qualities. For a detailed treatment of this important subject see 2:24.

1315. Commentary:

The verse means that it is no wonder that disbelievers look upon the Quran as a fabrication (see the preceding verse). When a man does not understand a thing fully, he is prone to deny it. As disbelievers did not comprehend the Quranic teaching and found it to be contradictory to many of their confirmed views and cherished notions, they rejected it forthwith. The words, *they have rejected that the knowledge of which they did not compass*, may also mean, "they hastened to reject the Quran before even trying to understand it or knowing its true significance."

The words, *nor has the true significance thereof yet come to them*, may lead some to think that if a long period must elapse before the reality and true significance of some of the things promised by the Prophets could be known, then it would not be wrong to disbelieve in them in the beginning when that reality could not yet be known. But such an inference would be manifestly wrong. The verse does not mean that in the beginning the Prophets do not possess those proofs and arguments which can help seekers after truth to know and recognize their truth. What it means is that those who, in spite of witnessing signs which go to establish the truth of a Prophet, attach importance to certain other matters to which they wrongly give undue weight, should not be in a hurry to deny the truth of the Prophet on that score only but should wait till those matters about which they entertain doubts are clarified.

The Rev. Mr. Wherry, quoting Brinkman, says that on the basis of this verse no blame could attach to the Meccans for rejecting the Quran, because, according to the Quran itself, they were not yet in full possession of the required knowledge. But the reverend gentleman did not trouble to consider that it is one thing to be unable to possess full knowledge about a certain thing and quite another not to try to acquire such

41. And of them [a]there are some who believe therein, and of them there are others who do not believe therein, and thy Lord well knows those who act corruptly.**1316**

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِهٖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ ع

R. 5.

42. And if they accuse thee of lying, say, [b]'For me is my work and for you is your work. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.'**1317**

وَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ لِّيْ عَمَلِيْ وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۚ اَنْتُمْ بَرِيْٓـُٔوْنَ مِمَّآ اَعْمَلُ وَاَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

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[a]2:254; 4:56. [b]2:140; 109:7.

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knowledge. The Quran does not say that disbelievers were unable to get sufficient knowledge by which they could know the truth of the Holy Prophet, but that they never tried to acquire such knowledge and rejected him on the ground that he was a common man like themselves.

1316. Commentary:

The verse says that in spite of the hostile attitude of disbelievers, they will not all remain unguided. Some of them will change their minds and accept the truth. Only those who persist in their evil ways and continue to act corruptly to the last will deprive themselves permanently of faith and guidance. The verse gives the reason why Divine punishment was delayed, which is that there was not only the likelihood of some of the opponents of Islam eventually accepting it but that God knew for a fact that some of them would actually become sincere Muslims. He, therefore, refrained from sending His punishment earlier.

The verse constituted a powerful prophecy which was fulfilled in due course. If the Meccans had been destroyed immediately after they rejected the Holy Prophet, how would men like Khālid bin Walīd, 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ, 'Ikrimah bin Abū Jahl and many other brave and valiant champions of Islam, have accepted the true faith?

1317. Commentary:

This verse throws interesting light on the catholicity and broad-mindedness of Islam. Disbelievers are told here that if they prefer to reject the Holy Prophet, they are at perfect liberty to do so. In fact, whenever there exists a difference of views between two parties, each party has the right to show the other to be in error. But this difference should not

43. And among them are [a]some who give ear to thee. [b]But canst thou make the deaf hear, even though they understand not?[1318]

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾

44. [c]And among them are some who look towards thee. But canst thou guide the blind even though they see not?[1319]

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْظُرُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾

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[a]6:26; 17:48. [b]27:81. [c]7:199.

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be allowed to go further, and one party should not compel the other party to accept its views.

The verse declares that when it is well known that believers and disbelievers are two distinct and separate parties and there is no likelihood of the one being mistaken for the other, and when their ways of working are also different, then there is no reason why compulsion should be resorted to. Compulsion may only be exercised when the conduct of one party is likely to bring discredit to the other party. But, situated as they are, the works of a Prophet and of his followers bring no discredit to disbelievers, nor do the actions of disbelievers bring any discredit to believers. Therefore, there is no justification for either of the two classes to bring compulsion to bear on the other.

The verse is also capable of another interpretation. It may mean that the works of the Holy Prophet are quite distinct from those of the disbelievers and there is no similarity between the two. This being so, the result would show whose works are right and whose wrong. When there is similarity between the works of two parties, it is difficult to determine definitely the cause of the progress or degeneration, as the case may be, of one party or the other. But when there exists absolutely no similarity between the works of two parties, everybody is in a position to fix responsibility for the result.

1318. Commentary:

This and the following verses give the reason why disbelievers reject the truth. We are told that their rejection is not based on any sound ground or solid reason but is due only to their bigotry and perverseness. Disbelievers appear to listen to the Holy Prophet, but they listen merely with the intention of finding fault with him. The verse further says that even a deaf person who is otherwise intelligent may be made to understand a thing by means of signs but disbelievers are like a person who is both deaf and devoid of understanding. So they cannot be made to understand even by means of signs.

1319. Commentary:

In this verse the expression لايبصرون

45. Certainly, [a]Allah wrongs not men at all, but men wrong their own souls.[1320]

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ۝٤٥

[a]4:41; 9:70; 18:50; 30:10.

(they see not) does not mean that disbelievers do not possess the faculty of sight, because a reference to this fact has already been made in the word "blind." What it means is that they do not also possess the perceptive faculty of the mind, i.e. understanding and intelligence. In the previous verse, disbelievers were spoken of as devoid of "understanding" in addition to their being devoid of "the faculty of hearing" and in the present verse they are spoken of as destitute of "perceptive faculty of the mind," in addition to their being blind. The two verses taken together thus point out that disbelievers cannot possibly find the right way when they are not only devoid of the power of hearing but also of spiritual sight.

The verse also implies that we should not judge others merely by their outward appearance. One judging only by appearance will be tempted to object why punishment does not seize the disbelievers at once. But God knows that there are among them some who are ultimately to become Muslims. On the other hand, there are some who appear as if they would accept the truth, but in spite of possessing ears they hear not and in spite of possessing eyes they see not, and always go on criticizing. But God knows who is going to believe and who not, and He knows also who deserves to be punished and who merits a good reward. So He has reserved to Himself the right when and whom to punish. This is how the present and the previous verses explain the words, *thy Lord well knows those who act corruptly*, occurring in v. 41.

1320. Commentary:

This verse forms a fitting sequel to the preceding ones. It says that God Who has sent the Prophet and should, on account of his rejection by disbelievers, naturally be disposed to inflict swift punishment on them, is granting them respite and does not desire to punish them soon, but disbelievers themselves demand a speedy punishment. God does not wish to do wrong to them, i.e. He does not like to destroy them while there is yet time for them to repent and accept guidance, but they themselves demand punishment and thus wrong their own souls.

This verse also furnishes an explanation of all such verses from which some people conclude that men are prevented from accepting guidance because they are predestined to be misguided and that it is God Who makes men commit all the sins they commit. All such conclusions are based on the supposition that God acts unjustly towards His creatures. The present verse contradicts this baseless

46. And on the day when He shall gather them together, [a]*it will appear to them* as though they had not tarried in the world save for an hour of a day. They will recognize one another. [b]Losers indeed are those who deny the meeting with Allah and would not follow guidance.[1321]

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا
سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ
قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ
وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾

47. And [c]if We show thee *in thy lifetime the fulfilment of* some of the things with which We have threatened them, *thou wilt*

وَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ
نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ

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[a]30:56; 46:36. [b]6:32; 30:9; 32:11. [c]13:41; 40:78.

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supposition by expressly stating that God never acts unjustly towards His creatures. On the contrary, He affords them all possible opportunities to accept the truth.

1321. Commentary:

Disbelievers have been several times spoken of in the Quran as having stayed in the world only for an hour of a day. In all such verses it is not the actual time of their staying in the world that is meant. It is only their being engrossed in worldly affairs and idle pursuits that is implied. The day is primarily meant for work and, inasmuch as disbelievers spend most of their time in earning the paltry goods of the world or pass their time in hunting after enjoyment and do not make any effort to win the pleasure of God, it may be rightly said of them that they have lived in the world only for a day, even though they may have actually lived for thousands of years, for they do not benefit by their lives and do not put their days to the right use for which they are meant. If it had been meant to give the actual period of time for which disbelievers stayed on earth, there was no need of specifying the time of the day, for time can be measured by night also.

The words, *who deny the meeting with Allah*, supply the reason why disbelievers pass their life in negligence. It was due to their lack of faith in meeting with God, which indeed is a great incentive to good works. Both those who obey through fear and those who obey from motives of love are prompted to do good works because they know that one day they will stand before God when they will have to render an account of their deeds. When this faith is wanting, negligence is the natural consequence.

know it; or if We cause thee to die *before that,* then to Us is their return, *and thou wilt see the fulfilment in the next world*; and Allah is witness to all that they do.[1322]

عَلٰى مَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٤٧

1322. Important Words:

اما was originally ان ما, the particle ما having been added to ان which means "If." The added particle ما is technically known as زائدة (redundant). But these so-called redundant words are not without purpose. They are used to emphasize or intensify the meaning of the word to which they are added. The change effected in the sense of the particle ان by the addition of the particle ما is that whereas ان alone expresses a mere contingency or possibility which is not necessarily accompanied by hope, the addition of the particle ما makes the contingency not only more emphatic but also expressive of hope.

Commentary:

This verse lays down the important principle that prophecies containing warnings and threats of coming punishment are subject to revocation. The verse shows that prophecies are of two kinds: (1) those that are conditional, as appear from the words اما (if) and او (or) used in the verse; (2) those that are revocable or subject to cancellation, as hinted at in the words بعض (some) and نرينك (We show thee in thy lifetime). The word بعض (some) definitely shows that the present verse speaks of only those prophecies that were meant to be fulfilled during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, for the prophecies which related to the time subsequent to his death, were obviously not meant to be fulfilled during his lifetime and therefore did not need to be mentioned in the present context. Incidentally, the verse also points to the possibility that no prophecy of punishment might be fulfilled in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, for it was possible that all those to whom he preached his Message might believe in him and thus there might be no occasion for punishment. The verse is so worded as to show the absolute power of God; otherwise, ordinarily, all men do not believe.

The verse also shows that it is not necessary that prophecies should have a time-limit, for the time given for the fulfilment of the prophecies referred to here is unrestricted, extending even to the period subsequent to the death of the Holy Prophet. Nay, even if an apparent time-limit is prescribed, which in the present case is the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, the time-limit is only of secondary importance, for the verse definitely admits the possibility of some of these prophecies remaining unfulfilled during the lifetime of the Prophet.

It further emerges from this verse

48. And [a]for every people there is a Messenger. So when their Messenger comes, it is judged between them with equity, and they are not wronged.**1323**

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلٌ ۚ فَإِذَا جَآءَ رَسُوْلُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾

49. And [b]they say, 'When will this promise be *fulfilled*, if you are truthful?'**1324**

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

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[a]16:37; 35:25. [b]21:39; 27:72; 34:30; 36:49.

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that only such prophecies are liable to be revoked or cancelled as relate to matters of detail, for the prophecies which concern fundamental principles and are general in character are never revoked. An instance of the prophecies of this class is to be had in the well-known verse, *Allah has decreed: of a certainty I will prevail, I and My Messengers* (58:22); while the prophecies which are liable to be cancelled, are those to which the verse under comment relates, for here the words are, *the things with which We have threatened them*. This shows that the prophecies comprising threats and warnings about impending punishment are liable to be cancelled, while those containing promises of a general character not applying to a particular Prophet but embodying a general rule that applies to all the Prophets of God can never be cancelled and must be fulfilled.

1323. Commentary:

It is wrong to infer from this verse that only one Messenger is sent to a people. It is the appearance of a Messenger and not the number of such Messengers that is meant here. In other words, the verse tells us that no people is left without a Divine Messenger. Moreover, to interpret this verse as meaning that every nation has only one Messenger sent to them contradicts the established facts of history. Both Moses and Aaron, who were real brothers, were sent not only to the same people but in the same age. In fact, what is intended here is that every religious community takes its birth from the advent of a heavenly Messenger. Obviously it refers to a Law-giving Prophet, for all religious dispensations are founded by Law-giving Prophets.

The latter portion of the verse means that those who show themselves deserving of inclusion among the followers of a Prophet get the opportunity to do so, while those who reject the Divine Messenger are destroyed. Thus no people can become heirs to God's blessings and favours unless they follow the Messenger of God who is sent to them.

1324. Commentary:

Strange, indeed, are the ways of

50. Say, [a]‘I have no power for myself over any harm or benefit, save that which Allah wills. [b]For every *disbelieving* people there is an appointed term. When their term is come, they cannot remain behind a single moment, nor can they get ahead *of it.*’**1325**

قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا اِلَّا
مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ؕ اِذَا جَآءَ
اَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا
يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ۝٥٠

51. Say, [c]‘Tell me, if His punishment comes upon you by night or by day, how will the guilty ones run away from it?**1326**

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُهٗ بَيَاتًا اَوْ
نَهَارًا مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۝٥١

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[a]7:189. [b]7:35; 16:62; 35:46. [c]6:48; 7:98-99.

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disbelievers! In the preceding verse it was indirectly stated that rejection of, and separation from, a Prophet of God lead to ruin, while those who accept a Prophet are saved. At this disbelievers, instead of seeking God’s mercy, at once begin to ask when the threatened punishment will come. They do not seem to be satisfied with anything except punishment.

1325. Commentary:

This verse embodies a reply to the disbelievers’ demand for punishment (mentioned in the preceding verse). The Holy Prophet is bidden to ask them how he could fulfil their demand for punishment when personally he possessed no power either to do good to, or avert evil from, himself. How clearly this and similar other verses show that the real object of the Quran is to uphold the Unity of God! The Quran cannot bear any human being, even the greatest of all the Prophets, to be regarded as equal to God.

The word امة (people) in this verse means those who disbelieve and not people generally as referred to in v. 48. The verse means to say that there comes a time when disbelievers meet their inevitable end and their place is taken by another people who follow the Divine Messenger. In other words, the Holy Prophet is made to say to disbelievers that, though it is not in his power to bring punishment on them, yet, as it is the immutable law of God that when a people take to evil ways they decline and fall, they will not be allowed to go unpunished and on their ashes a new people shall arise and a new era of truth shall dawn.

1326. Important Words:

ارءيتم (Tell me) means, have you considered; or tell me you; or simply, tell me(Lane).

52. Is it then when it has befallen you that you will believe in it? [a]What! Now! And *before this* you used to demand its speedy coming?’**1327**

اَثُمَّ اِذَا مَا وَقَعَ اٰمَنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ ؕ آٰلۡـٰٔنَ وَقَدۡ كُنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ تَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۲﴾

53. [b]Then will it be said to those who did wrong, ‘Taste ye the abiding punishment. You are not requited save for that which you used to earn.’**1328**

ثُمَّ قِيۡلَ لِلَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ الۡخُلۡدِ ۚ هَلۡ تُجۡزَوۡنَ اِلَّا بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

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[a]10:92. [b]34:43.

Commentary:

The words, *by night or by day*, contain a subtle allusion to the destruction of the people of Mecca, on whom punishment was to come both during the day and at night. At the Battle of Badr, which was the first pitched battle fought between Muslims and Meccans and in which the foundations were laid of the latter’s complete destruction, they had a foretaste of their ruin "by day" while at the Battle of the Ditch, which was the last real trial of strength between the two parties, the circumstances which caused their ruin were brought into existence "by night." The punishment which was to overtake the Meccans by night has been mentioned here before that which was to overtake them by day, because the former was to deal to them a blow which was to end their power for all time.

The verse also constitutes a rebuke to disbelievers that they should not indulge in futile discussion as to the time and form of the promised punishment but should try to escape it by effecting a change in their lives.

1327. Commentary:

This verse contains an effective reply to those who demand the sign of punishment. They are told that the real object for which signs are shown is that they should benefit by them. But what sense is there in demanding the sign of punishment when, with the actual coming of destructive punishment the door of repentance is finally closed and readiness to believe becomes a useless thing?

The words, *you used to demand its speedy coming*, signify that those who desire to hasten punishment set a seal on their own disbelief and desire to die in that state. How then can they, consistently with their attitude, turn to belief when the punishment of death stares them in the face?

1328. Important Words:

عذاب الخلد (the abiding punishment). خلد (*khalada*) means, he or it remained or stayed; or he or it remained or stayed long. اخلد الى الارض

54. And they enquire of thee, 'Is it true?' [a]Say, 'Yea, by my Lord! It is most surely true; and you cannot frustrate *it*.'**1329**

وَيَسْتَنْۢبِـُٔوْنَكَ اَحَقٌّ هُوَ ۭ قُلْ اِيْ وَرَبِّيْٓ
اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ ۚۘ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ٥٤

R. 6.

55. And [b]if every soul that does wrong possessed all that is in the earth, it would surely offer to ransom *itself* therewith. [c]And they will conceal *their* remorse when they see the punishment. And judgement shall be passed between them with equity, and

وَلَوْ اَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي
الْاَرْضِ لَافْتَدَتْ بِهٖ ۭ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ
لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ٥٥

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[a]11:18. [b]39:48. [c]34:34.

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means, he inclined and clove to the earth (Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The expression عذاب الخلد (the abiding punishment) means, a punishment that will come to stay with and cleave to disbelievers. It does not mean a punishment which knows no end and which can in no circumstances be removed. The word خلد (*khuld*) i.e. lasting, thus only expresses the firm adherence of the punishment to those afflicted by it, so that it will not be averted and will, as it were, stick to evildoers.

1329. Commentary:

Such is the way of the wicked that, when the truth is brought home to them and they cannot refute it, they have recourse to scoffing and mocking. Accordingly, we are told in this verse that when disbelievers will be unable to answer arguments placed before them, they will have recourse to scoffing and, pretending to assume a serious attitude, will enquire whether what has been said is really true. The pseudo-enquiry referred to here is the same as contained in 78:2,3 and alludes to the punishment which is to overtake the disbelieving people. The Holy Prophet is bidden not to mind their ridicule but to warn them that what they have been told is true and will certainly come to pass. By using the words و ربي (by my Lord), the Quran adduces the then weak condition of the Holy Prophet as evidence of his truth and reminds disbelievers that from the way in which God had been gradually furthering and promoting the Prophet's cause, it could be easily seen that the time was not far off when Islam would completely triumph and the enemy would find himself utterly beaten.

they shall not be wronged.**1330**

56. [a]Know ye! To Allah, surely, belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Know ye, that Allah’s promise is surely true! But most of them understand not.**1331**

أَلَآ إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ؕ
أَلَآ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٥٦

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[a] 2:285; 10:67; 31:27.

1330. Important Words:

اسروا (they will conceal). اسره gives two contrary meanings: (1) he concealed it; (2) he manifested or revealed it, or he made it known (Lane).

Commentary:

Man is so made by nature that punishment has two different effects on him. It increases the obstinacy and refractoriness of some, while it renders others humble and docile. But the punishment inflicted by God is never such as to produce doubtful results. Its effect is straight and certain. It breaks the pride of the arrogant. The reason of the difference between the punishment inflicted by God and that inflicted by man is that the latter affects only the body, man having no power to inspire the heart with awe, while the former affects both the body and the heart. The verse purports to say that when God’s punishment overtakes men, it strikes awe into their hearts and they become prepared to save themselves by making every sacrifice in their power, and, as it always descends on the right person and on the right occasion, men realize its justice and therefore become repentant and begin to bring about a real change in their lives.

The verse may have another meaning also. God’s punishment descends only on those who oppose His teachings. Such people have no high ideals. They are mean and niggardly and it is only their base desires that prompt them to oppose the truth. Thus the verse purports to say that those on whom God’s punishment descends are incapable of manifesting any magnanimity of heart, and in time of trouble seek to save their skins by sacrificing anything, even their personal or national honour, which men of high ideals always try to save even at the cost of their lives. This, the verse hints, is evidence of their being in error; for if they had been in the right, they would not have stooped to such meanness. See Important Words.

The words اسروا الندامة (they will conceal their remorse) may also be rendered as, "they will manifest or express their remorse."

1331. Commentary:

The verse points to a great truth. As all that is in the heavens and the earth

57. [a]He it is Who gives life and causes death, and to Him shall you be brought back.1332

هُوَ يُحۡيٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۵۷﴾

58. O mankind! There has come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever *disease* there is in the hearts, and [b]a guidance and a mercy to the believers.1333

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدۡ جَآءَتۡكُمۡ مَّوۡعِظَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ وَشِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُوۡرِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحۡمَةٌ لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a]3:157; 7:159; 44:9; 57:3. [b]12:112; 27:3.

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belongs to Allah it is vain and foolish to try to please Him or His Messengers by offering them bribes (see the preceding verse). The Prophets of God cannot be prevented from carrying out their mission for the sake of bribes. The Meccans, desiring to stop the preaching of the Holy Prophet against idolatry, offered him every kind of bribe; but the only reply which all those bribes and temptations elicited from him was to the effect that even if they placed the sun on his right and the moon on his left, he would not give up his mission (Hishām & Zurqānī).

The fact is that as kings and potentates need the things of this world, therefore bribes and ransoms please them, but God Himself being the Creator of all things, ransoms have no value for Him except that one should offer the sacrifice of one's own self, which finds ready acceptance with Him, for such sacrifice is a means of self-purification.

1332. Commentary:

Disbelievers wondered how an ordinary individual like the Prophet of Islam would triumph in the face of the united opposition of his numerous and powerful enemies. This verse is intended to set their doubts at rest by pointing to the rise and fall of nations and individuals in this world and draws their attention to the fact that it is inconceivable that a Messenger of the All-Powerful God Who gives life and causes death should not succeed.

1333. Important Words:

موعظة (an exhortation) is derived from وعظ. They say وعظه i.e. he reminded him of that which should soften his heart by the mention of reward or punishment; he exhorted or admonished or warned him; he gave him good advice or counsel; he reminded him of the results of affairs; he put him in fear. موعظة means, an exhortation or admonition or warning of the nature detailed above; sincere exhortation or warning; the exhortation which leads to repentance and reformation (Lane & Aqrab).

الصدور (the hearts) is the plural of الصدر which means, the breast, chest or bosom; the mind; the upper part of the front of a thing. Sometimes صدر is taken to signify the heart because it lies in the bosom (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse sheds some light on the secret of the Holy Prophet's phenomenal success. It tells us that it was not due to vast armies, great riches or large numbers of followers, but to this excellent Book, the Quran, whose teaching cannot long be resisted and to which sooner or later man is bound to turn for guidance, for it is an "exhortation from your Lord" and a "cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts" as well as a "guidance and a mercy."

The Quran is موعظة (an exhortation), for: (a) it contains teachings which proceed from a genuine desire to impart good counsel, and when people see that the Prophet seeks no personal aggrandizement by promulgating these teachings but only their own good and their own welfare, they will not fail to be attracted to it; (b) the Quranic teaching is calculated to deeply affect and touch the human heart, and it lays so much stress on the love and fear of God that even the most hard-hearted man cannot remain unaffected by it; and (c) it has set forth in a beautiful manner all those principles and rules of conduct which lead to reformation and success.

The Quran, as the verse tells us, is also شفاء (cure) for all spiritual diseases and maladies. No matter how low a man may fall, there continues to arise in his mind a yearning for truth, a desire to know the reality of things; and it is when his mind is distracted by doubts and misgivings and he seeks satisfaction on questions concerning spiritual matters that the Quran comes to his rescue and dispels all his doubts, with the result that he becomes irresistibly drawn to it.

The Quran is also a "cure" for what is in the heart in the sense that it satisfies the cravings of the heart. It is in the nature of man that, when he reads about great spiritual men and learns how the great depths of religious teachings were disclosed to them, he is moved by the desire that what he believes in only as a matter of faith should become converted into a certainty and a matter of personal experience and that he should also realize what holy men in the past had realized. This is a desire which disquiets many a heart and those whose hearts are seized with this longing will find solace in this Book, and they will find therein the guidance which will lead them to God.

The Quran is also "a guidance and a mercy," which, besides other meanings, also signifies the means of rise and progress in the world. Some men are so dull of understanding that they cannot comprehend the value or depth or niceties of spiritual knowledge and the philosophy of religion. It is only the splendour of material progress that attracts their attention. For the satisfaction of such persons, God shows special material favours to those who believe in this Book.

59. Say, ‘All this is through the grace of Allah and through His mercy; therein, therefore, let

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ فَبِذٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا ؕ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ۝٥٩

The four points mentioned above led to the extraordinary success of Islam and, for that matter, to the success of all true religions. Those gifted with quick intelligence and true perception recognized the truth of Islam merely on finding that its teaching had the good of mankind as its only objective and that it had its basis in a sincere desire to see mankind directed to the right path. But those whose perceptive powers were less acute and less fine had their doubts satisfied by the rational arguments contained in the Quran. Those who were still slower to understand became convinced of the truth of Islam when they saw the great moral and spiritual change that its teaching brought about in the lives of its followers. And those possessed of the lowest or meanest understanding, whom riches and worldly progress alone could convince, saw the truth of Islam in the material glory and worldly grandeur that fell to the lot of its followers.

It may well be asked here what the Quran means by saying that it is *a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts*, when it is the brain that is the source and fountain-head of all thoughts? In this respect it must be remembered that spiritual matters have a very deep and subtle connexion with the human heart. The experience of all spiritual men has established the fact that the heart is the seat of things pertaining to the spirit. But just as it is difficult to get a true knowledge of the soul and to ascertain the nature of its connexion with the body by material means, similarly, it is difficult to understand the connexion that exists between the soul and the human heart by the aid of physical laws. So in this matter we have naturally to rely on the testimony of those who have experience and their unanimous testimony is that the heart plays a great part in spiritual matters. This testimony is by no means inconsistent with the fact that the brain is the centre of thinking. It is quite possible that changes in the blood should have a bearing on the thoughts being good or bad, and as it is through the heart that the circulation of the blood is regulated, it is quite understandable that the heart should exercise a subtle influence on the thoughts of man. It is an admitted fact that food exercises a deep influence on man’s thoughts, and obviously this influence cannot be exercised except through the heart. In this sense, the heart may also be said to be the seat and source of thoughts. The Quran refers to this subject where it says: *O ye Messengers, eat of the good and pure things and (as a result thereof) act righteously* (23:52).

them rejoice. [a]That is better than what they hoard.’[1334]

60. Say, ‘Have you considered that Allah sent down provision to you, [b]then you made *some* of it unlawful and *some* lawful?’ Say, ‘Has Allah permitted you *that* or do you invent lies against Allah?’[1335]

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ
فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا وَّ حَلٰلًا ؕ قُلْ آٰللّٰهُ
اَذِنَ لَكُمْ اَمْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَفْتَرُوْنَ ۝۶۰

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[a]43:33. [b]5:104.

1334. Commentary:

This verse reminds us that the blessings mentioned in the preceding verse can be attained only through the grace and mercy of God, and therefore he who has faith in God should not feel proud of his material resources but should rejoice only in God’s grace and mercy.

The verse also hints that disbelievers foolishly feel proud of *what they hoard*, viz. their material resources, which are as nothing against God’s grace and mercy or against the great spiritual treasures of the Quran referred to in the preceding verse.

1335. Commentary:

In v. 58, it was stated that the Holy Prophet has been given a Book which possesses the power to remove doubts and misgivings. In proof of this claim the Quran in the present verse refers to a rule of conduct which people before Islam observed with regard to eatables, merely because it came to them from their forefathers, though reason revolted against it. Eating and drinking is one of the primary needs of mankind and it is the first duty of a religion to guide men in this respect. Before the advent of Islam, however, the world possessed no right guidance on this subject. Men followed no fixed principle or law, declaring one thing lawful and another unlawful as they desired. It stands to reason, however, that there should be some medical, moral or religious grounds for the declaration of some things as lawful and others as unlawful. An arbitrary classification into clean and unclean things without valid reason is to belie God’s creation. There are sure to arise doubts in the minds of men with regard to such arbitrary classification, and only that religion can successfully remove such doubts which lays down and expounds definite laws and regulations with regard to eatables. Islam has clearly done that. So it excels other religions in this respect also that it has laid down definite laws and regulations according to which things belonging to a certain category are treated as lawful and clean and those belonging to another category as unlawful and unclean, and has not laid down its

61. What think those who invent lies against Allah of the Day of Resurrection? Surely, [a]Allah is gracious towards mankind, but most of them are not thankful.**1336**

وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ
عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا
يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

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62. And thou art not engaged in anything, and thou recitest not from Him any portion of the Quran, and [b]you do no work, but We are witnesses of you when you are engrossed therein. [c]And there is not hidden from thy Lord even an atom's weight

وَمَا تَكُوْنُ فِيْ شَاْنٍ وَّمَا تَتْلُوْا مِنْهُ مِنْ
قُرْاٰنٍ وَّلَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ اِلَّا كُنَّا
عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُوْدًا اِذْ تُفِيْضُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَا
يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَّبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي
الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَآءِ وَلَآ اَصْغَرَ مِنْ

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[a]27:74; 40:62. [b]57:5; 58:8. [c]34:4.

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teachings in an arbitrary manner.

1336. Important Words:

يوم القيامة (of the Day of Resurrection). In this expression the particle في (of or about) is understood before the word يوم (Day).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that no man can forge lies against God, if he has any faith left in Him. So matters like eatables should not be treated lightly. In fact, forging lies against God in such matters is, as the verse hints, a sign of loss of faith in the Day of Resurrection. People dismiss such matters as of no importance, because they have no faith in God-sent guidance and prefer their own conjectures to revealed teachings.

The verse may be interpreted as containing another argument of the fact that the religion of disbelievers is based on no sound reason. That argument lies in their denial of the Day of Resurrection. The verse points out that the very thought that on a certain day sinners will have to render an account of their deeds sends a shudder through them, and so they deny the very existence of such a day. But the denial of a thing cannot disprove its existence. It is foolish to deny the infliction of punishment on the basis of fear. Moreover, the Day of Resurrection is meant to serve as an incentive to spiritual progress, and not to frighten men. It is just like an examination, the object of which is not that students should fail but that they should work hard and make themselves deserving of promotion and prizes. But those who do not

ذٰلِكَ وَلَآ اَكْبَرَ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (٦٢)

in the earth or in heaven. And there is nothing smaller than that or greater, but it is recorded in a clear Book.[1337]

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work hard must fail.

1337. Important Words:

شأن (anything) is the substantive noun from شأن. They say شأنت شأنه i.e. I pursued his way or course, doing as he did. They say هو رجل عظيم الشان i.e. he is a man of great importance. The Arabs say من شأنه ان يفعل كذا i.e. it is his business or his way or nature to do such a thing. شأن means, a thing, an affair or a business; state, condition, quality or manner; importance attached to a person or thing (Lane & Aqrab).

يعزب (is hidden) is formed from عزب which means, he or it was or became distant or remote or absent; he or it became hidden or concealed; he or it went away or departed. They say عزبت الابل i.e. the camels went away to a distance in the pasturage not returning in the evening. عزب عن فلان حلمه means, the forbearance of such a one quitted him. عزبت الارض means, the land was or became destitute of inhabitants (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The present is one of the most remarkable verses of the Quran. It appears as if God is making His address from the Throne of His Majesty and Glory. Whereas on one side of Him are seated the Holy Prophet and his followers, on the other are the disbelievers. The words, *And thou art not engaged in anything and thou recitest not from Him any portion of the Quran,* refer to the Holy Prophet and Muslims, and the words, *and you do no work but We are witnesses of you when you are engrossed therein,* are addressed to disbelievers. The verse reminds believers that mere acceptance of truth or mere preaching of the word of God is not sufficient. It is the way in which one carries belief into practice and the motives behind actions that really count. A true believer, therefore, should always be subjecting his intentions and deeds to strict scrutiny. So let not those who have believed delude themselves with the idea that the mere profession of faith and the preaching of it would win them the pleasure of God and attract His help. They will have to show by the sincerity of their motives and the purity of their conduct that they really deserve it. The verse embodies the great lesson that unless good actions are performed with pure motives and done in the right manner, they cannot produce good results or win the pleasure of God. To the other side, also, the stern warning is issued that their denial of the truth and mocking and scoffing at it as well as their activities against the religion of God are not going unnoticed and they will meet with the fate they deserve.

The words اصغر and اكبر (smaller and greater) have been used to point out that whereas some things remain

63. [a]Behold! the friends of Allah shall certainly have no fear, nor shall they grieve—1338	أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾
64. Those who believed and kept to righteousness—1339	ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَكَانُوا۟ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

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[a] 2:63.

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hidden on account of their smallness, there are others, parts of which remain hidden owing to their largeness. For instance, one can see only a part of a big mountain and not the whole. The Quran, therefore, rightly says that on the one hand God's vision is so sharp and penetrating that nothing, however, small it may be, can remain hidden from Him; and on the other hand, His vision is so comprehensive that no part of a thing, however big it may be, can escape His sight.

Moreover, science has established the fact that both seeing and hearing depend on waves and vibrations and that there is a limit to perception by both eye and ear. The eye does not react to vibrations which fall short of a certain limit, nor to those which are beyond a certain limit. The same is the case with the ear. The ear cannot hear a sound which is communicated to it by vibrations which are less than thirty per second or which exceed forty per second. Thus, even scientifically, it is proved that certain things escape the comprehension of both the ear and the eye by reason of either their smallness or their bigness. But, says the Quran, it is not so with God, Who sees all things in their entirety.

1338. Commentary:

The words لا خوف عليهم (shall have no fear) mean that believers do not fear that any real harm will ever befall them. The words do not mean that no danger will ever confront them. Similarly, the expression ولا هم يحزنون (nor shall they grieve) means that believers will suffer no grief on account of what they did in the past. Thus both the future and the past have been made secure for the Faithful. This is a wonderful position, for no power on earth can guarantee true peace and security to a person regarding both his future and his past. It is God alone Who can do that. It is a pity, however, that instead of turning to God people seek security where they cannot find it.

The words (fear) خوف and حزن (grief) have indeed been used in the Quran on certain occasions with regard to Prophets, but the fear or grief of the Prophets is not about themselves, but about others, and to feel fear or grief about others is a commendable thing and not a punishment. It is in this sense that the word حزن (grief) has been used with regard to Prophet Jacob in 12:85 and the word خوف (fear) with regard to Zechariah in 19:6.

1339. Commentary:

This verse gives a description of

اولیاء اللہ (friends of God) referred to in the preceding verse. They are (1) perfect in faith and (2) observe the highest standard of righteousness. The Holy Prophet has also given a description of the "friends of God," which may be taken as an explanation of this verse and may therefore be given here. He is reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgement the 'friends of God' will be brought in the presence of God in three classes. First of all, a person from among the first group will be presented to God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this question he will reply, 'O my Lord, Thou didst create Heaven, its trees and its fruits, its flowing streams and beautiful maids, its manifold bounties and sundry other things. Thou hast prepared these for those who are obedient to Thee. So in order to attain these blessings, O my Lord, I passed my nights praying and my days fasting.' Upon this God will say to him, 'O My servant, thou didst good works in order to get Heaven. So here it is, enter it and please thyself. It is an act of grace on My part that I have saved thee from the Fire, and it is an act of grace on My part that I have granted thee Heaven. So enter it and those that are with thee.' Then a person from among the second group will be presented before God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this he will reply, 'O my Lord! Thou didst create Hell and its burning fire, its hot winds and boiling water, and Thou didst prepare many other dreadful things for those who are disobedient to Thee. So out of the fear of these things, I stood up praying at night and fasted during the day.' Then God will say to him, 'O My servant, thou didst good works, fearing Hellfire; so I have liberated thee from it and it is an act of grace on My part that I caused thee to enter Heaven.' So he and those with him will enter Heaven. Then a person out of the third group will be presented before God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this he will reply by saying, 'O my Lord, I did all I did solely out of love for Thee and out of a yearning to meet Thee. By Thy glory, I stood up praying at night, and fasted during the day, out of a yearning for Thee.' Then God will say to him, 'Thou didst good works out of love for Me and out of a yearning for Me. So have your reward.' Then the Lord of Glory and Majesty will manifest Himself to him and say, 'Here I am, have a look at Me,' and will say, 'As an act of grace, I liberate thee from the Fire and I grant thee Paradise. I will send to thee My angels to visit thee and will Myself greet thee with the greeting of peace.' Upon this he and his companions will enter Paradise" (Kathīr, v. 5, p. 122). It is, of course, apparent that the person chosen from each group will be the best man in the group and will be presented to God as its representative.

There are also other sayings of the Holy Prophet bearing on the different grades of the "friends of God." The following saying is quoted by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Abū

65. [a]For them are glad tidings in the present life and *also* in the Hereafter—there is no changing the words of Allah—that indeed is the supreme triumph.**1340**

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰى فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ؕ ٦٥

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[a] 41:31.

Hurairah: "Of the servants of God there are some whom even the Prophets and the Martyrs envy." On being asked by his Companions who were those lucky people, the Holy Prophet said, "They are men who love one another only for God's sake. The goods of this world or the ties of kinship are not the incentives of their love. Their faces will shine with light and they will be seated on luminous pulpits. When others will be fearful, they will be free from fear, and when others will bewail their past misfortunes, they will enjoy peace of mind" (Dāwūd).

The statement that even the Prophets envy such persons does not mean that such persons are superior to Prophets, for the Prophets are themselves the best "friends of God." It simply means that the Prophets are particularly pleased with the condition of these persons and desire that such friends of God should be found in large numbers among their own followers.

1340. Commentary:

In reply to a question as to what was meant by the expression, *glad tidings in the present life,* the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "It means a true dream or vision that a believer sees with regard to himself, or what others see with regard to him." The term بشری or مبشرات (glad tidings) is, however, of general application and may be used with regard to the revelations and visions of the Prophets as well as those of saints and other believers, and the verse under comment refers to both these kinds of visions and revelations (Jarīr & Kathīr).

The words, *there is no changing the words of God,* may mean two things: (a) that the granting of بشری (glad tidings) is an eternal law of God, and being eternal, it must prove true in the case of Muslims also; and (b) that this is a special promise meant for Muslims and God has decreed that this promise will never change. This implies that there are certain prophecies which do not belong to the category of the "words of God" as used here, and are liable to be changed, but there are certain others, which belong to the category of the "words of God" and these never fail to be fulfilled.

The expression, *that indeed is the supreme triumph,* may mean either that the receiving of "glad tidings" is a great achievement, or the fact that the "words of God" do not change is a great secret of success. The verse is capable of bearing both these

66. And [a]let not their words grieve thee. Surely, all power belongs to Allah. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.**1341**

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ۭ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦٦﴾

67. Behold! [b]whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth is Allah's. Those who call on others than Allah do not *really* follow *these* 'partners'; [c]they follow only a conjecture, and they do nothing but guess.**1342**

أَلَآ إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۭ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ۭ إِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

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[a]36:77. [b]10:56. [c]10:37.

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interpretations. That the receiving of "glad tidings" is really a great triumph is self-evident. As for the immutability of the "words of God," i.e. the laws of nature, one can easily see that the whole working of the universe is based on it. Everything is governed by certain fixed and immutable laws. For example, fire burns and water assuages thirst. If these laws had been subject to change, the whole system of the universe would have gone to pieces. It is, therefore, on the unchangeability of the laws of nature that all progress depends.

1341. Commentary:

In v. 63, it was said that the "friends of God" never grieve, but here the Holy Prophet is bidden not to grieve. This apparent inconsistency has already been explained under v. 63, where it has been noted that the "friends of God" entertain no grief on their own account. Nor was the grief of the Holy Prophet referred to here a personal grief. It was solely due to the fact that people had made God the target of their objections. He is, therefore, asked not to grieve on that account, for those objections are futile and cannot affect the honour of God. The verse thus shows how great, on the one hand, was the love of the Holy Prophet for God, inasmuch as objections of disbelievers against Him filled him with great grief, and, on the other hand, it tells us how great was God's love for the Holy Prophet, inasmuch as He consoles him on that account and asks him not to feel grieved at the attacks which ignorant people make against Him.

1342. Important Words:

يخرصون (they guess) is derived from خرص which means, (1) he guessed or he made a conjecture; (2) he lied or he forged a lie (Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse embodies a twofold

68. [a]He it is Who has made for you the night *dark* that you may rest therein, and the day full of light. Surely, therein are Signs for a people who listen.[1343]

هُوَ الَّذِيۡ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيۡلَ لِتَسۡكُنُوۡا فِيۡهِ
وَالنَّهَارَ مُبۡصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ
لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّسۡمَعُوۡنَ ﴿۶۸﴾

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[a] 17:13; 27:87; 28:74; 30:24.

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consolation for the Prophet. Firstly, he has been told that, apart from a natural concern for them on account of their wrong beliefs, he need not worry or grieve over what disbelievers do, because their case is in the hands of God the Almighty Who possesses the power to punish them or to lead them to the right path. Secondly, the verse hints that the idolatrous beliefs of disbelievers have no foundation in fact and are consequently doomed to perish sooner or later. The Holy Prophet should, therefore, feel no anxiety on their account.

The word ما (not) in the clause, "do not really follow" is used both as an interrogative pronoun meaning "what" and as a negative particle meaning "no or not." In the former case the sentence would mean, "what do those who call on 'partners' beside Allah follow?" Taken in the latter sense, it would mean, "those who call on others than Allah do not really follow these 'partners.'" Thus, according to the former interpretation, the so-called 'partners' whom people worship beside God are spoken of with the contempt they deserve; while, according to the latter interpretation, their very existence is denied, hinting that truly speaking there are no 'partners' and the idolaters follow nothing but mere conjecture.

1343. Commentary:

The words "night" and "day" have been used here metaphorically, the night being the time of rest and the day that of work. Just as night affords the fatigued and jaded physical faculties of man an opportunity for recuperation, and fits him for the ensuing day's work, so do the intervals of sleep and stagnation in the lives of nations serve as time of rest and recuperation for them and prepare them for their time of day and work with refreshed spirit and renewed vigour.

In this way the people to whom the Holy Prophet gave his Message are reminded that, now that the Spiritual Sun has risen, they should avail themselves of its light and work hard to bring about a change in their condition. It is to point to this great lesson that the verse first speaks of the night and then of the day.

It seems strange that while the verse makes a reference to "the day full of light," it concludes with the seemingly incompatible words "therein are signs for a people who listen." The word "listen" in preference to the more appropriate word "see" has been used to remind the people that when they had derived

69. [a]They say, ‘Allah has taken unto Him a son.’ Holy is He! He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you say against Allah what you know not?1344

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ؕ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ؕ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍۭ بِهٰذَا ؕ اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

70. Say, [b]‘Those who invent a lie against Allah shall not prosper.’

قُلْ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ؕ ﴿٧٠﴾

71. [c]*They will have some* enjoyment in this world. Then to Us is their return. Then shall We make them taste a severe punishment, because they used to disbelieve.

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيْقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيْدَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ ع

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[a]2:117; 4:172; 9:31; 17:112; 18:5, 6. [b]4:51; 16:117. [c]3:15, 198; 9:38; 16:118; 28:61; 40:40

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no benefit from the light of the Spiritual Sun that had shone on them and had refused to use their eyes, they should at least make use of their ears so that they might receive a new life by benefiting from the experience of others.

1344. Commentary:

In v. 67, it had been hinted that in the false doctrines of disbelievers lie hidden the seeds of their destruction. In the present verse, the Quran proceeds to refute the doctrine of the plurality of gods, the most heinous of all false beliefs, and of the various forms of this doctrine it selects the belief that God has a son. This doctrine differs from other known polytheistic dogmas in that, whereas in other forms of *shirk,* idolaters claim only that they can attain nearness to God through the instrumentality of their gods, by this doctrine a person is believed to be an actual partner in Godhead.

Four arguments have been given here in refutation of the doctrine that a person can be a Son of God. The first is contained in the words, *Holy is He,* which mean that God is free from all defects and imperfections. But the belief that God has a son presupposes the presence of carnal passions in Him as well as His being subject to the laws of decay and death, for only such beings or things are perpetuated in their progeny as are subject to

R. 8.

72. And recite unto them the story of Noah, when he said to his people, “O my people, [a]if my station *with God* and my reminding you *of your duty* through the Signs of Allah offend you—and in Allah do I

وَاتۡلُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ نَبَاَ نُوۡحٍ ۘ اِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهٖ وقف لازم
يٰقَوۡمِ اِنۡ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مَّقَامِيۡ
وَتَذۡكِيۡرِيۡ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَعَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلۡتُ
فَاَجۡمِعُوۡۤا اَمۡرَكُمۡ وَشُرَكَآءَكُمۡ ثُمَّ لَا

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[a] 71:8.

decay and death. The earth, the sun and the moon, for instance, have no issue because they are above the familiar law of death and decay; but animals and plants wither and die. Therefore they produce their substitutes which take their place when they are gone. Thus the existence of the progeny of a thing presupposes its mortality.

The second argument is embodied in the words, *He is Self-Sufficient*, which mean that in His work of running the universe God does not need anybody’s help. Progeny, besides saving a person from extinction, helps him to carry on his work. But God being Self-Sufficient needs no helper in that respect either.

The third argument is contained in the sentence, *To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth*. Sometimes one can make or originate a thing but lacks the power or ability to keep it in his possession or under his control and therefore needs assistance. But God does not need anybody’s help to keep the universe in His possession or under His control.

The fourth argument is implied in the expression, *You have no authority for this,* which signifies that the doctrine of the plurality of gods is based on no sound or solid ground. Its whole basis lies in the fancy and caprice of men. This fact alone constitutes an argument against this foolish doctrine. All efforts to find some real evidence in support of *shirk*, do not go beyond mere indulgence in idle philosophical discussion, and no real basis has so far been found for it.

The argument embodied in the words, *Do you say against Allah what you know not*?, is given in 13:34, in the words, *Would you inform Him of what He does not know in the earth*? The difference in the wording is due to the fact that in the verse under comment it is pointed out that *shirk* springs from the ignorance of man and is not based on any sound reasoning, while in 13:34 it is said that the doctrine of *shirk* involves the charge of ignorance on the part of God, for it means that He failed to know and make known the existence of gods and it was left to idolaters to disclose the godhead of their deities by the force of their own knowledge.

put my trust—muster then *all* your designs, *you* and your ‘partners’; then let not your course of action be obscure to you; then carry out *your designs* against me and give me no respite.[1345]

يَكُنْ اَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوْٓا
اِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ۝٧٢

1345. Important Words:

غمة (obscure) is the noun-infinitive from غم. They say غمه i.e. he covered it or concealed it; he or it grieved him or caused him to mourn. غم الهلال عن الناس means, the new moon was veiled or concealed from the people by clouds, or otherwise, so that it was not seen. غم عليه الامر means, the affair was or became obscure, confused, dubious, or vague to him such as it could not be understood. غمة means, perplexity, obscurity, dubiousness or confusedness. They say هو فى غمة من امره i.e. he is in a state of perplexity or darkness in respect of his affair. امر غمة means, a dubious, obscure, confused or vague case (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

As already pointed out, the *Sūrahs* which open with the abbreviated letters الر (I am Allah Who is All-Seeing) deal chiefly with historical events in the lives of various Prophets and draw inferences therefrom (see note on v. 2). This *Sūrah* also begins with الر and we find that the Quran here follows a rational discussion with particular reference to the case of Noah in order to remind people that, although Noah’s opponents did all sorts of mischief and left no stone unturned to bring him to naught, yet God did not destroy them at once but granted them respite for a long time, and it was only when their wickedness exceeded all limits and when those who were destined to believe in him had believed, that God sent down His punishment on them and brought about their destruction.

The case of three Prophets—Noah, Moses and Jonah—has been mentioned in this *Sūrah* by way of illustration. Noah’s history constitutes an illustration of the total destruction of the enemies of truth; that of Moses illustrates the destruction of one people and the salvation of another; while that of Jonah forms an example of the complete deliverance of an iniquitous people from God’s punishment when they repented and prayed for His forgiveness. By citing these three distinct examples with reference to the Holy Prophet, the Quran intends to point out that there are three ways of God’s dealings with the enemies of His Prophets: (1) that sometimes He brings about their total destruction, as was the case with the people of Noah when all his enemies were destroyed with the exception of only a few; (2) that sometimes He destroys some and saves others who believe in His Prophet, as was the case in the time of Moses when Pharaoh and his army were drowned and the Israelites were saved; (3) that sometimes He saves all when they repent and beg for His mercy, as happened with the people of the Prophet Jonah. By citing these examples the Quran means to exhort the people of the Holy Prophet to follow the example of the people of Jonah and be saved and not to court destruction like the opponents of Noah and Moses.

From the above it will also be seen that the accounts of the lives of the various Prophets as given in the Quran are not simply interesting stories. A careful perusal of the accounts of the three Prophets mentioned above, in the order in which they are given in this *Sūrah*, clearly shows that their life story is epitomized in the life of the Holy Prophet. Many of the incidents in his life bear a striking resemblance to those in the lives of these Prophets. He played the part of Noah at Mecca, that of Moses at Medina and that of Jonah on his re-entry into Mecca. This is enough to show that the accounts of the Prophets as given in the Quran are not mere stories but constitute great prophecies about important events in the life of the Holy Prophet.

Incidentally, the verse lays down five rules which lead to the completion and consummation of a plan and which if carefully observed must lead to success: (1) to "muster one’s designs" i.e. to decide upon a course of action after mutual consultation and full deliberation; (2) to organize in a well-knit and disciplined body all "partners" or confederates, i.e. those who hold analogous views and have faith in the success of the programme decided upon; (3) to chalk out a detailed and clear programme leaving no "obscurity" or dubiousness, about it; (4) to carry out the agreed design collectively by collating all available resources so that the full strength of the community may be brought to bear upon the enemy at the same time; and (5) to "give no respite" to the enemy to recuperate and recover after the attack is launched. These are the means of success to which Noah has drawn the attention of his enemies in this verse. But at the same time he warns them that even if they employed all these methods against him, they would not succeed, for they did not possess the sixth and the most important ingredient of success, which was certainty of faith in God and trust in Him, without which all these methods were of no avail against a Divine Messenger.

Marvellous indeed is the faith which Prophets of God have in the truth of their mission and in the unfailing character of the promises and assurances which they receive from God! Not only do they not mind the hostility of their enemies but they even challenge the latter to use all their power and employ all their resources to destroy them, because they are perfectly convinced that success will come to them in the end, and such invariably happens to be the case. This fact alone should establish

73. But if you turn back, *remember,* I have not asked of you any reward. My reward is with Allah alone, and [a]I have been commanded to be of those who are resigned *to Him.*”**1346**

فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّيۡتُمۡ فَمَا سَاَلۡتُكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَجۡرٍ ؕ اِنۡ
اَجۡرِىَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۙ وَاُمِرۡتُ اَنۡ اَكُوۡنَ
مِنَ الۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۷۳﴾

74. But they rejected him, so [b]We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark. And We made them inheritors *of Our favours,* while We drowned those who rejected Our Signs.

فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَنَجَّيۡنٰهُ وَمَنۡ مَّعَهٗ فِى الۡفُلۡكِ
وَجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ خَلٰٓئِفَ وَاَغۡرَقۡنَا الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَانۡظُرۡ كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ

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[a]6:91; 11:30. [b]29:16.

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their truth; but the blind will not see nor will the deaf hear.

1346. Commentary:

It is a common objection against the Prophets of God that they seek to gain ascendency over men by raising the standard of revolt against the existing order of things with a view to establishing a new order under their own leadership. It is this baseless charge that is refuted in this verse. God’s Prophets never seek self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, they choose the path of suffering and service. They pass their days in hardship and privation. Their life is a model of rigid discipline willingly undergone. Had their activities been prompted by a desire to gain power and dominion over men, they would not have subjected themselves to a hard and disciplined life, a life of prayer, fasting and renunciation. They do demand obedience of others, but they themselves are always the first to forego their desires and their ambitions in the service of their Lord and of humanity. It is not the desire for power but the passion for service and self-abnegation that has mastery of them. This is not an empty assertion, unsubstantiated by the established facts of history; for though the Prophet Noah, in whose mouth are put the words, *I have not asked of you any reward,* did not get the opportunity to subjugate his enemies, yet the Holy Prophet of Islam who was, like Noah, a Prophet of God, did show by actual practice that God’s Prophets desire no reward for their service in the form of riches or dominion. The fact is too well-known to need a reference that when Mecca lay prostrate at the Prophet’s feet, he forgave his most inveterate enemies with a magnanimity unparalleled in the history of the world. He demanded no fine and asked for no indemnity from the defeated Meccans or their allies. The only words he uttered were: "Go, you

See then, how evil was the end of those who had been warned!**1347**

الْمُنْذَرِينَ ۝٧٤

75. Then We sent, after him, *other* Messengers to their *respective* peoples, and [a]they brought them clear proofs. But they would not believe in *them*, because they had rejected them before. Thus do We seal the hearts of transgressors.**1348**

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَآءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ۝٧٥

76. [b]Then did We send, after them, Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our Signs, but they behaved arrogantly. And they were a sinful people.**1349**

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُّوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ۝٧٦

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[a]30:48; 40:24. [b]7:104.

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are a free and forgiven people."

1347. Commentary:

This verse tells us that there is a basic difference between the punishment of those who are given a previous warning and that of those who have had no such warning. The words, *how evil was the end of those who had been warned*, point to this difference. Those warned of the coming punishment of God never escape except by removing the cause of punishment.

The words, *We made them inheritors of Our favours*, contain a veiled warning for believers. When one people have been destroyed, those who take their place must prove themselves to be deserving of God's favours, if they wish them to continue.

1348. Commentary:

This verse makes it quite clear that it is not God Who arbitrarily seals up the hearts of disbelievers but it is the disbelievers themselves who, by their stubborn and unjustified refusal to listen to the word of God, become deprived of their power to see and accept the truth. They themselves are the architects of their evil destiny and not God Who only proclaims the things already brought about by their own persistent transgression. The act of sealing up the hearts of disbelievers is attributed to God because He is the Final Judge Who pronounces the verdict.

1349. Commentary:

A Prophet of God is rejected for

77. And [a]when there came to them the truth from Us, they said, ‘This is surely a manifest enchantment.’ 1350

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ
هٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۷۷﴾

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[a] 40:26.

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two reasons. Either the people to whom he preaches his Message look upon his claim as too big, thinking that God cannot speak to a man; or, behaving arrogantly, they think it to be beneath their dignity to follow his lead. This happened with Moses. Some of those to whom he delivered his Message rejected his claim because they thought it impossible that God should have condescended to speak to a mortal; others thought it incompatible with their dignity to obey a man of no consequence like Moses.

The clause, *they were a sinful people*, may have two meanings: (1) They were already a sinful people and therefore they rejected Moses. Taken in this sense, the words furnish the reason why they behaved with arrogance and paid no heed to the truth. (2) They became sinful in consequence of their rejection of Moses. Both interpretations explain why people reject the truth. Evil is born of evil and also leads to it; and therefore those who lead a sinful life cannot accept the truth. Again, the goodness and godliness of a person sometimes make him proud and prompt him to reject the truth. The rejection of truth is therefore no light matter, and one should think a thousand times before one rejects a claimant to prophethood.

1350. Important Words:

سحر (enchantment) means, producing what is false in the form of truth; embellishment by falsification and deceit; enchantment or fascination (Lane). See also 2:103 & 7:110.

مبین (manifest) has three meanings: (1) manifest, apparent or clear; (2) that which makes a thing clear or manifest; (3) that which separates, disunites or severs (Lane). See also 2:169.

Commentary:

In the two simple words سحر and مبین lie hidden almost all the stratagems and machinations that the enemies of the Prophets of God employ to defeat and discomfit them. People with a religious bent of mind are told by them that the new teaching is nothing but a سحر or a fraud which would corrupt the religion of the land, whereas those nationalists who profess to have the material good of their country at heart are frightened away from it by being told that the new teaching is مبین i.e. the acceptance of it would create dissension and discord among the different communities in the land and would thus give a death-blow to the national cause. (For the meaning of the word مبین see Important Words). This double weapon has always been used against heavenly Messengers—from Moses

78. Moses said, ‘Do you say *this* of the truth when it has come to you? Is this enchantment? And [a]the enchanters never prosper.’**1351**

قَالَ مُوْسٰۤی اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَكُمْ ؕ اَسِحْرٌ هٰذَا ؕ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السّٰحِرُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾

79. They said, ‘Hast thou come to us that thou mayest turn us away from what we found our fathers following, and that you two may have greatness in the land? But [b]we will not believe in either of you.’**1352**

قَالُوْۤا اَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا وَتَكُوْنَ لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾

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[a] 20:70. [b] 7:133.

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right up to the Holy Prophet—and it was employed in our own times against Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. His opponents accused him of misleading people by deceitful teachings and of creating discord among Muslims, naively forgetting that discord had already eaten into the national entity of Islam and the efforts of Aḥmad were all directed to uniting the broken threads of the Faith.

1351. Commentary:

The expression, *Is this enchantment*?, constitutes an effective refutation of the charge implied in the words سحر مبين (manifest enchantment) in the preceding verse. Moses is described here as asking his people how his teaching could be called an enchantment when it crushed all falsehood, deceit and trickery. The words, *And the enchanters never prosper*, provide the second refutation of the same charge. Enchanters, the verse purports to say, merely practise deception and propagate falsehood. They can never attain the success that comes to the Prophets, who have a great mission. The Prophets come to bring about a complete change in the lives of their followers and they succeed in this great and difficult mission despite all obstacles and impediments. In the face of this undeniable fact, how could the Prophets be called enchanters and spreaders of falsehood?

1352. Important Words:

تلفتنا (thou mayest turn us away) is derived from لفت. They say لفته i.e. he twisted or wrung or turned him or it in a way different from his or its proper direction. لفته عن رأيه means, he turned him from his opinion (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The two charges briefly referred to

80. [a]And Pharaoh said, 'Bring to me every expert magician.'1353

وَقَالَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ ائۡتُوۡنِیۡ بِکُلِّ سٰحِرٍ
عَلِیۡمٍ ﴿۸۰﴾

81. And when the magicians came, Moses said to them, [b]'Cast ye what you would cast.'1354

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ السَّحَرَۃُ قَالَ لَہُمۡ مُّوۡسٰۤی
اَلۡقُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّلۡقُوۡنَ ﴿۸۱﴾

82. And when they had cast, [c]Moses said, 'What you have brought is *mere* sorcery. Surely,

فَلَمَّاۤ اَلۡقَوۡا قَالَ مُوۡسٰی مَا جِئۡتُمۡ بِہِ ۙ
السِّحۡرُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَیُبۡطِلُہٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ لَا

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[a]7:113; 26:37, 38. [b]7:117; 20:67; 26:44. [c]7:119; 20:70.

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in the words سحر مبین (manifest enchantment) in v. 77 have been explained in the present verse. The first charge implied in the word سحر (enchantment) was that Moses wanted to turn his people away from the truth. In this verse the opponents of Moses are described as saying that he wanted to turn them away from the religion of their forefathers which, in their opinion, as also in the opinion of all enemies of God's Prophets, was the truth. Their second objection is hinted at in the word مبین i.e. he sought to sow dissensions among the people. This charge has been expressed here in the allegation that Moses and Aaron desired to have dominion in the land, which could be secured only by creating disruption in the existing order of things.

1353. Commentary:

One error leads to another. Pharaoh and his people called Moses an enchanter (v. 77), and the result was that, instead of following the right course for the investigation of truth, they set about finding out sorcerers to oppose him and thus were caught in the very net which they thought they had laid for Moses.

1354. Commentary:

This verse, as may be wrongly construed, does not mean that on seeing the sorcerers Moses became prepared to meet them in the contest. He knew that they were mere sorcerers and that whatever they might do would be useless and unworthy of his notice. He therefore treated them with the contempt they deserved by saying, *Cast ye what you would cast*, hinting that their sorcery was not worthy of notice. He, however, did not think it proper to refuse to accept their challenge outright, knowing that when the actual contest began the hollowness of their work would itself become exposed and it would then be time for him to bring home to them the falsity of their work. This he actually did, as is announced by him in the succeeding verse, *What you have*

Allah will make it vain. Verily, Allah does not allow the work of mischief-makers to prosper.1355

يُصۡلِحُ عَمَلَ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾

83. And [a]Allah establishes the truth by His words, even though the sinners be averse *to it.*'1356

وَيُحِقُّ اللّٰهُ الۡحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ ع ۸ ۱۲ ۱۳

R. 9.

84. And none obeyed Moses, save some youths from among his people, because of the fear of Pharaoh and their chiefs, lest he should persecute them. And of a truth [b]Pharaoh was a tyrant in the land and surely he was of the transgressors.1357

فَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ لِمُوۡسٰٓى اِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ عَلٰى خَوۡفٍ مِّنۡ فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهِمۡ اَنۡ يَّفۡتِنَهُمۡ‌ؕ وَاِنَّ فِرۡعَوۡنَ لَعَالٍ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ‌ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الۡمُسۡرِفِيۡنَ ﴿۸۴﴾

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[a]8:9. [b]28:5.

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brought is mere sorcery. Surely, Allah will make it vain.

1355. Commentary:

See note on the preceding verse.

1356. Commentary:

The "words of God" include both "glad tidings" and "warning," and it is by means of these two that God establishes the truth. Moses has expressed a great truth in this verse. He says that God does not need deceit and falsehood for the propagation of His religion but causes it to be spread and established by His immutable decree and command. These words embody a great moral truth that the goodness of a right cause does not justify the use of dishonest means for its propagation. The popular saying that the end justifies the means has never been the dictum of God's Prophets and their true followers. Truth spreads and triumphs by its own inherent strength and not by falsehood.

1357. Commentary:

It appears from this verse that all the Israelites had not believed in Moses. Only a part of them had really believed in him. The rest followed him from only political or national considerations. The pronoun "his" in the clause, *from among his people,* may also refer to Pharaoh. In that case the clause would mean that some youths of the people of Pharaoh also believed in Moses. But the former interpretation seems to be more correct and is therefore preferable.

This verse also brings to light the

85. And Moses said, ‘O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then in Him put your trust, if you indeed submit *to His will.*’ **1358**

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى يٰقَوْمِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمِيْنَ ۝٨٥

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fact that not unoften an appreciable number of the people to whom a Prophet of God preaches his Message become convinced of his truth, but they dare not profess their faith openly for fear of their leaders and chiefs. The pronoun "their" in the words "their chiefs" may refer either to the Israelites or to the people of Pharaoh. Preferably it refers to the people of Pharaoh. The chiefs of the people of Pharaoh have been called the chiefs of the Israelites because the latter were a subject people. But the pronoun need not necessarily be taken as referring to any particular people. The great men of a country are regarded as chiefs not merely because they belong to any particular community but also because, being members of the government, they possess influence and authority. Hence the high officials of the State, whether they belonged to the people of Pharaoh or the Israelites might rightly be called the chiefs of the Israelites and it was through both that Pharaoh tyrannized over the Israelites.

The words, *Pharaoh was a tyrant in the land*, show that Pharaoh was not a wise and sagacious monarch. He had embarked upon a policy of open repression and persecution which was calculated to incite the people to rebellion. This policy eventually led to the downfall of the dynasty.

1358. Commentary:

The verse represents Moses as advising his people to realize that their work, viz. the work they were engaged in under his leadership, was God’s own work. This shows that Islam recognizes no narrow nationalism but requires its followers to work for God and His religion.

This is calculated to bring about a great change in a Muslim’s outlook on life. It helps him to think in terms of God, religion and righteousness and raises him above the narrow outlook of nationalism.

The words, *if you indeed submit to His will*, preceded by the expression, *if you have believed in Allah*, are not redundant but have been used to express an additional idea. When the word اسلام (submission) is used along with the word ایمان (belief), then the latter word signifies sincerity and firmness of faith while the former expresses only outward submission to authority. In other words, ایمان expresses "obedience of the heart," while اسلام signifies "outward or practical obedience." In this sense the verse would mean, "If you have acquired faith with regard to God and now you desire to taste the fruits thereof practically, then put your trust in God and entrust all your

86. And they said, ‘In Allah do we put *our* trust. Our Lord, make us not a trial for the wrongdoing people.[1359]

فَقَالُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا
فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾

87. And deliver us by Thy mercy from the disbelieving people.’

وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾

88. And We spoke to Moses and his brother, *saying*, ‘Take, ye two, some houses for your people in *the* town, and make your houses so as to face one another and observe Prayer. And give glad tidings to the believers.’[1360]

وَاَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰى وَاَخِيْهِ اَنْ تَبَوَّاٰ
لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوْتًا وَّاجْعَلُوْا
بُيُوْتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾

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affairs to Him."

The verse thus teaches us that inner faith must be followed by a real outward change in the life of a person. For a true believer ایمان comes first and اسلام afterwards. But in the case of those weak of faith, اسلام takes precedence over ایمان because the weak of faith first begin with an outward expression of obedience and then gradually acquire heartfelt conviction. Thus in the case of a true believer purity of heart precedes purity of actions. But the reverse is the case of one who is weak of faith, for such a person stands in need of outside support for the purity of his heart. The purity of his actions, therefore, precedes the purity of his heart. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it addresses the people of the desert in the words: *Say, ye believe not, but rather say, We submit, for faith has not yet entered your hearts (49:15).*

1359. Commentary:

The expression, *Our Lord, make us not a trial for the wrongdoing people*, means either "may we not give, by our conduct, the wrongdoing people an opportunity to attack the true Faith"; or "make us not a target of the tyrannies of the wrongdoing people."

1360. Important Words:

قبلة (so as to face one another) is derived from قبل. They say قبل المكان i.e. he came facing the house. استقبله means, he faced him or it; he turned his face to him. قابله means, he was opposite to him. قبلة in the sense of متقابلة means, facing each other. It also means, direction; kind or class (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:143.

مصر (town) means both Egypt and town.

89. And Moses said, ‘Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed upon Pharaoh and his chiefs embellishment and wealth in the present life, with the result, our Lord, that they are leading *men* astray from Thy path. Our Lord! destroy their riches and attack their hearts—and they [a]are not

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبَّنَاۤ اِنَّكَ اٰتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ
وَمَلَاَهٗ زِيْنَةً وَّاَمْوَالًا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ
رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ۚ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ
عَلٰۤى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا
يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿۸۹﴾

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[a] 10:97-98.

Commentary:

The injunction to live in a town does not mean that the Israelites lived in the wilderness before this. The verse only emphasizes the necessity and usefulness of a civilized and corporate life. There is a general tendency on the part of the members of weak minority communities to live together in big towns.

In view of the different meanings of the word قبلة given under Important Words the Quranic expression اجعلوا بیوتکم قبلة may mean: (1) that the Israelites were instructed to live together so as to be able to help one another in time of need, because this object is only attainable when people build their houses near or facing each other; or (2) that the Israelites should have all their houses facing one direction, which figuratively means that they should be united by the bonds of brotherhood and should have a common goal or ideal; or (3) that all their houses should be of one class or kind, hinting thereby that there should exist a real tie of brotherhood between the rich and the poor and all should pull together as one team, because there can be no real tie of brotherhood when some members of a community live in palatial dwellings and others in wretched hovels.

To sum up, the verse lays down the following seven wise principles by following which a people can rise and prosper—(1) they should lead a corporate life; (2) they should be united; (3) they should fully co-operate with one another; (4) they should possess discipline and organization; (5) there should be no invidious distinction between the different classes; (6) they should continually invoke the help of God by prayer; and (7) they should be persevering. Finally, the verse contains an equally important direction for the head or leader of the community, which is that he should continue to give "glad tidings," i.e. he should speak words of encouragement and good cheer to his people because nothing is more detrimental to success than despair and despondency.

going to believe until they see the grievous punishment.’[1361]

1361. Important Words:

زينة (embellishment) is the substantive noun from زان which means, he or it adorned, decorated, embellished, beautified or graced (him or it). زينة means, a thing with which one is adorned or embellished or beautified; any ornature, decoration, embellishment or grace. The words زينة الحيوة الدنيا (lit. ornature of the present life) particularly include wealth and children (Lane).

ل (with the result that) means, (1) so that; (2) with the result that.

اطمس (destroy) is derived from طمس meaning, it became effaced or obliterated. They say طمس عليه i.e. he effaced or obliterated or extirpated it; or he destroyed it. طمسه means, he transformed or metamorphosed him or it (Lane).

اشدد على قلوبهم (attack their hearts). اشدد is derived from شد. They say شده i.e. he tied, bound or made him or it fast. شد عضده means, he strengthened his arm. شد على العدو means, he charged or assaulted or attacked the enemy (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse does not mean that God gave wealth and splendour to Pharaoh and his chiefs so that by means of these things they might lead men astray from His path. It simply means that God bestowed upon Pharaoh and his chiefs the gifts of this world and the result was that, instead of being thankful to Him for His manifold favours, they began to lead men astray from His path. The verse is, in fact, a forceful expression by Moses of regret and condemnation.

In his words of prayer, *Our Lord, destroy their riches and attack their hearts*, which form a parenthetical clause, Moses wishes Pharaoh and his chiefs no evil; on the contrary, the words constitute a pathetic prayer for their good. Realizing that they had become so hardened in disbelief that nothing but God’s severe punishment could make them believe, Moses prayed to God to send down His punishment on them not to destroy them but to turn their hearts to truth. So the words, seemingly containing a prayer for the destruction of Pharaoh and his chiefs, in reality embody a prayer for their good and spiritual wellbeing. The prayer in fact resembles a request by a well-wisher for the amputation of the diseased limb of a patient, and is therefore definitely a prayer for mercy though couched in apparently harsh words.

The clause اشدد على قلوبهم (attack their hearts) has wrongly been interpreted by some as "harden their hearts." According to Arabic idiom, the words only mean "attack their hearts," signifying that some affliction should befall them to turn their hearts to truth. The word قلوب (hearts) corresponds to the word زينة (embellishment) occurring in the foregoing clause and, as زينة here signifies progeny and children (see

90. He said, 'Your prayer is accepted. So be ye twain steadfast, and follow not the path of those who know not.'[1362]

قَالَ قَدۡ اُجِيۡبَتۡ دَّعۡوَتُكُمَا فَاسۡتَقِيۡمَا
وَلَا تَتَّبِعٰٓنِّ سَبِيۡلَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝۹۰

Important Words), therefore attacking their hearts would mean attacking their progeny. Now an attack upon the progeny of a people may be made in two ways: either by the children being smitten with some calamity or misfortune, or by making the children renounce the faith of their forefathers and go over to the new faith. It was in the latter way that the hearts of disbelievers were attacked in the time of the Holy Prophet, for their children embraced Islam. In the time of Moses, however, his enemies were punished with the death of all their firstborn children (Exod. 12:29).

It is worthy of note here that in the first part of the verse where mention is made of the favours of God, the word زينة (embellishment), which here stands for "children," is placed before اموال (wealth), while in the prayer where reference is made to punishment, اموال (wealth) is mentioned before قلوب (hearts) which here stands for "children," thus reversing the previous order. The reason for this change in the order of words is that while mentioning His favours God has put زينة (embellishment), which represents children, before اموال (wealth), because of its being the more important of the two, but when referring to punishment, the lesser calamity has been mentioned first, hinting thereby that if disbelievers mended their ways after suffering a financial loss, they might still be spared the punishment concerning their progeny. This change in the order of words, besides revealing the wisdom underlying the arrangement of words in the Quran, also throws interesting light on the tender-heartedness of Moses.

1362. Commentary:

It seems strange that when the offering of prayer is spoken of, Moses alone is mentioned as having prayed (see the preceding verse); but when in the present verse the acceptance of prayer is mentioned, God has joined Aaron with Moses by using the pronoun كما (lit. you both). This is so because Moses, though apparently praying alone, had joined Aaron in his prayer by using the words ربنا (Our Lord) in the preceding verse.

The words, *follow not the path of those who know not*, contain an explanation of a previous injunction calling on Moses and Aaron to be steadfast. The words do not mean that the Prophets of God sometimes follow the wishes of disbelievers. They only imply a warning to Moses and Aaron to be on their guard against the machinations of their enemies and to refrain from indulging in discussions which might turn their attention away from their real goal, as their enemies desired.

91. And [a]We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and [b]Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them wrongfully and aggressively, till, when *the calamity of* drowning overtook him, he said, ‘I believe that there is no God but He in Whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit *to Him.*’**1363**

وَجٰوَزْنَا بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْبَحْرَ فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ
فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ بَغْيًا وَّعَدْوًا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ
اَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ ۙ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ
اِلَّا الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَتْ بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَنَا
مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾

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[a]7:139; 20:78. [b]20:79; 26:61; 44:25.

1363. Commentary:

The verse throws interesting light on an important political question. Islam enjoins Muslims to obey their rulers. If, however, the latter deny to them religious freedom and resort to compulsion in matters of faith, Muslims are enjoined to migrate from their country rather than offer resistance to the established authority. But what should they do if the authorities do not even permit them to migrate and force them to remain in the country and suffer persecution? The verse under comment supplies an answer to this question by saying that Pharaoh pursued the Israelites "wrongfully and aggressively," which means that in preventing the Israelites from migrating Pharaoh was doing a thing to which he had absolutely no right. Thus if rulers prevent an oppressed subject people from peacefully leaving a country, the latter would be justified in resisting and opposing them by all legitimate means and in that case defiance of the authority will not be held as a breach of the law or an act of rebellion. Just as nobody is allowed to defy and break the law of the land in which he lives, similarly no Government has a right to compel any person to live under it while denying him freedom of religion and conscience.

The words, *He in Whom the children of Israel believe,* spoken by Pharaoh at the time of his drowning, show the utterly abject state of his mind at that time. If he had said that he believed in the God of Moses, he might be considered to have had some sense of dignity left in him because, having been brought up in the royal household and being the leader of his people, Moses was entitled to respect even from worldly considerations; but to say that he believed in Him in Whom the children of Israel believed—the very children of Israel whom it was his pride to trample under foot—bespeaks the great depth of abasement to which the proud Pharaoh had fallen.

92. [a]What! Now! while thou wast disobedient before *this* and wast of those who create disorder.**1364**

آٰلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

93. So this day We will save thee in thy body *alone* that thou mayest be a Sign to those *who come* after thee. And surely, many of mankind are heedless of Our Signs.**1365**

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيْكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ اٰيَةً ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا لَغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ ع

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[a] 10:52.

1364. Commentary:

The eloquent words, *What! Now!*, show that it is only in specified circumstances that faith proves to be of any avail. When truth becomes quite clear and there remains no doubt or ambiguity about it, faith loses all value. In fact, it is only effort and sacrifice that make a person deserving of reward, and where these are absent, man forfeits all title to it.

1365. Commentary:

Divine rewards, indeed, are pregnant with deep import. Pharaoh believed at a time when his faith was nothing more than a body without a soul: therefore, God rescued only his body from destruction, not letting his soul benefit by it. The body was saved from destruction that it might serve as a lesson for the generations to come.

It is remarkable that the Quran alone speaks of this fact. The Bible makes no mention of it, nor does any book of history. But in how wonderful a manner the word of God has proved true! After the lapse of more than 3,000 years the body of Pharaoh has been discovered and it now lies in a preserved state in a museum at Cairo. The body shows Pharaoh to have been a lean, short-bodied man, with a countenance expressive of anger and stupidity. How far removed is the present age from the time when Pharaoh lived; yet God the Almighty not only saved his body but has also preserved it to the present age.

This verse supplies very strong testimony to the Divine origin of the Quran and to its distinct superiority over the Bible. The Pentateuch professes to give the history of the time of Moses and it is claimed that it was written in his own time. Yet the Quran, which came about 2,000 years after the Torah, has mentioned some incidents (including the present one) which are not mentioned in the Bible but which subsequent events have proved to be true. This establishes the truth of the Quran and the unreliability of the Pentateuch

R. 10.

94. And We assigned to the children of Israel an excellent abode, and [a]We provided them with good things, and [b]they differed not until there came to them the knowledge. Surely, thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that in which they differed.[1366]

وَلَقَدۡ بَوَّاۡنَا بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ مُبَوَّاَ صِدۡقٍ
وَّ رَزَقۡنٰہُمۡ مِّنَ الطَّیِّبٰتِ ۚ فَمَا اخۡتَلَفُوۡا
حَتّٰی جَآءَہُمُ الۡعِلۡمُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّکَ یَقۡضِیۡ
بَیۡنَہُمۡ یَوۡمَ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ فِیۡمَا کَانُوۡا فِیۡہِ یَخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ ﴿۹۴﴾

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[a]45:17. [b]45:18.

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beyond any shadow of doubt.

The verse also points to the supreme moral lesson that we should hasten to accept the truth as soon as it comes to us and should not vacillate or procrastinate, as Pharaoh did.

It further shows that God does not allow even the slightest act of virtue to go unrewarded. Pharaoh believed at the time of his death, when his faith was but a shell without a kernel, yet even that act was not allowed to go quite unrewarded, for, though his soul was lost, his body was saved. His body may now prove the means of guiding many to truth; possibly it may spiritually benefit him also. This is perhaps why the famous Muslim saint, Muḥy-ud-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī, holds that Pharaoh may be spared the punishment of Hell. The idea may not be right but it certainly provides food for thought.

Some commentators are of the opinion that the name of the drowned Pharaoh was Rameses. But this does not appear to be right. Moses was certainly born in the time of Rameses II and was brought up by him (Exod. 1:11), but it was in the reign of his son, Merneptah (Meneptah) , that he was entrusted with the mission of a Prophet (Exod. 2:23). See also Jew. Enc., vol. 8, page 500, & Enc. Bib., under Pharaoh and under Egypt.

1366. Commentary:

Among the "good things" mentioned in this verse as having been bestowed on the Israelites, Divine revelation occupied the foremost place, for it mostly pertains to the spirit and comes direct from God. The words "good things" may also be taken in their material sense. In Egypt the Israelites worked as labourers and lived an ignoble life. But after their deliverance from bondage, God provided them with the good things of this world.

By the word علم (knowledge) in the clause, *until there came to them the knowledge*, is here meant the Quran and not the Torah, for there passed no interval between the revelation of the

95. And if thou art in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to thee, ask those who have been reading the Book before thee. Indeed the [a]truth has come to thee from thy Lord; be not, therefore, of those who doubt.**1367**

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ
فَسْئَلِ الَّذِيْنَ يَقْرَءُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَآءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا
تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ۙ﴿٩٥﴾

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[a] 2:148; 10:95; 11:18.

Torah and the formation of the Israelites into an organized community. Thus they cannot be said to have disagreed among themselves after its revelation.

When the Holy Prophet of Islam was about to make his appearance, the Jews held the belief that a Prophet like unto Moses was to appear very soon; but when the Promised Prophet did actually appear, they differed and disagreed as to whom the prophecies about the Promised Prophet applied. Some Jews denied that the prophecies had found fulfilment in the Prophet of Islam, while others sought to deny the very existence of any such prophecies in the Bible.

That the disagreement referred to in this verse was the one which arose among the Israelites after the Quran was revealed is also clear from the next verse which says: *And if thou, (O addressee) art in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to thee* (viz. the Quran). This verse clearly shows that in the verse under comment the "knowledge" after the coming of which the Israelites differed among themselves refers to the Quran.

The Jews were so ardently expecting the Prophet who was to be the like of Moses (Deut. 18:18) and who was to appear in Arabia amongst the descendants of Ishmael, the brethren of the Israelites, that some of them had even migrated to Arabia and had settled in Medina that they might be among the first to believe in him when he made his appearance. It is a strange irony of fate that these very Jewish settlers of Arabia proved to be his bitterest enemies when the Promised Prophet actually made his appearance.

1367. Commentary:

The words, *if thou art in doubt*, cannot refer to the Holy Prophet, for the Divine Messenger to whom the word of God is revealed can never entertain any doubt about it. Nor can these words be said to refer to any of his Companions, for we read in 12:109, *Say, this is my way; I invite unto Allah on sure knowledge—I and those who follow me*. It is therefore wrong to say that the Prophet or his Companions, who are represented here as possessing sure knowledge, ever entertained doubt about the truth

96. And be not thou of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of the losers.

وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾

97. [a]Surely, those against whom the word of thy Lord has taken effect will not believe,[1368]

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ
لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾

98. Even [b]if there come to them every Sign, till they see the grievous punishment.[1369]

وَلَوْ جَآءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ اٰيَةٍ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ
الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٩٨﴾

99. Why was there no *other* people, [c]save the people of Jonah, who should have believed

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيْمَانُهَآ
اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُوْنُسَ ۚ لَمَّآ اٰمَنُوْا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ

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[a]10:34; 40:7. [b]10:89. [c]37:149.

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of the Quran. The persons addressed here are undoubtedly those who differed among themselves after "knowledge" (the Quran) had come to them. See v. 94.

The objecters are further told that if, as they assert, this Book (i.e. the Quran) gives rise to doubts, they should enquire from those who have benefited by reading and acting upon it. They will then find how it has illuminated their hearts and raised them to the highest pinnacles of spiritual glory.

By saying, *ask those who have been reading the Book before thee,* the verse also makes it clear that a revealed book alone does not make a perfect guide and that a teacher is needed who, by his superior spiritual knowledge and practical example, should lay bare its hidden beauties and excellences.

1368. Commentary:

By كلمة (word) is here meant the word of warning or threat. The verse means that those who have become deserving of punishment and have made no effort to escape it in spite of warning, will not believe.

1369. Commentary:

This verse shows that the signs of God do not benefit those who have no desire to benefit by them. They treat even the greatest of signs as mere fraud. Hence the assertion of disbelievers made in the time of every Prophet that no sign has been shown to them is no evidence of the absence of any sign. One should not be misled by such baseless assertions but should ponder over the claims of a Prophet independently and form one's own judgement about them. One should judge the signs of the so that their belief would have profited them? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the present life, and We gave them provision for a while.[1370]

عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٩٩﴾

Prophet according to the criteria by which Divine Signs are judged.

1370. Important Words:

يونس (Jonah), the name of a Prophet who lived in the 9th Century B. C., is supposed to be derived from انس. They say انس به i.e. he was or became sociable, amiable or friendly with him; he was or became cheerful, gay or gladdened by his presence or company (Lane). See also Commentary below.

Commentary:

For those who are accustomed to pondering over the deep meanings of the Quran, this verse possesses remarkable evidence of the greatness of God's mercy. The almost pathetic words breathe a strong desire that the world should follow Divine guidance. The verse expresses the deepest regret at the disbelief of the people by asking why there had not been other people who, like the people of Jonah, should have believed in the truth and escaped Divine punishment. The case of the people of Jonah possesses a strong similarity with that of the people of the Holy Prophet. The people of Nineveh first bitterly opposed Jonah so much so that they were threatened with Divine punishment and Jonah prophesied their early destruction; but later they repented and were saved. In the same way, the people of Mecca opposed the Holy Prophet bitterly and persistently, but at the Fall of Mecca they submitted to him and were consequently saved from Divine punishment. Later, all of them believed in his mission and became the inheritors of Divine grace. In this way the Holy Prophet came to bear a great resemblance to the Prophet Jonah.

Jonah is a Prophet who has been mentioned in six different places in the Quran. In 37:140 he has been spoken of as a heavenly Messenger; in 6:87 and 4:164 he has been reckoned among the Prophets of God; in 21:88 and 68:49 he has been called ذوالنون and صاحب الحوت (i.e. "he of the fish" or "the man of the fish"), in allusion to the incident of the fish. Reference has also been made to him in the words of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said on one occasion, "Do not declare me to be better than Jonah, son of Amittai" (Muslim). The saying does not mean that the Holy Prophet was not superior to the Prophet Jonah, for he uttered these words before he had been informed by God of his superior spiritual rank. Later on, however, he himself said انا سيد ولد آدم i.e. "I am the chief of the children of Adam,"

100. And [a]if thy Lord had *enforced* His will, surely, all who are in the earth would have believed together. [b]Wilt thou, then, force men to become believers?**1371**

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَاٰمَنَ مَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتّٰى
يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝١٠٠

[a]6:150; 16:10.[b]2:257; 18:30.

meaning thereby that he was the best of all mankind and the Head of the human race (Tirmidhī, ch. on *al-Manāqib).*

The above saying of the Holy Prophet can also be explained in another way, which has a particular bearing on the verse under comment. The superiority referred to in this saying may not mean superiority in all respects but superiority in one respect only, viz. that all the people of Jonah finally believed in him—a distinction which till then was not shared by any other Prophet. Hence the Holy Prophet hesitated to ascribe unqualified superiority to himself over Jonah until he had seen the end of his people. But subsequent events conferred this distinction on him also, as, like the people of Jonah, all his people too finally believed in him.

In the Bible, Jonah is spoken of as an Israelite Prophet (2 Kings 14:25), who was bidden to go to Nineveh and "cry" against it. But fearing that the Ninevites may repent, he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. The Quran differs from the Bible on these points. The Prophets of God are, according to the Quran, incapable of disobeying Him in the way in which Jonah is represented to have done in the Bible. They are held out, in the Quran, as models whose example other people should follow (4:65 & 6:91). Disobedience to God is therefore the last thing of which a Prophet is capable. Again, it appears from the Quran that Jonah was sent to his own people, i.e. to a people to whom he belonged. According to Jewish tradition, however, he was a Jew but was sent to the people of Nineveh, which was the capital of Ashūr. So in the light of the Quranic version Jonah was either not an Israelite or he was sent not to Nineveh but to a section of his own people. Biblical scholars themselves are not agreed as to Jonah's being an Israelite. In the two points on which the Quran differs from the Bible, reason favours the Quran.

1371. Commentary:

As the previous verse expressed a desire on the part of God that all men should believe, therefore there is likely to arise in the minds of some people the question why God, Who is All-Powerful, does not carry out His wish and force all men to believe. This question has been very beautifully answered in this verse, which says that if God had exercised compulsion to carry out His wish, He

101. And no soul can believe except by the permission of Allah. And [a]He makes *His* wrath *descend* on those who would not use their reason.1372

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفۡسٍ اَنۡ تُؤۡمِنَ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَيَجۡعَلُ الرِّجۡسَ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

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[a] 6:126.

would not have confined His compulsion to one people but would have guided all who are in the earth. But He does not resort to compulsion and has left the matter of faith to the option of individuals, although He desires all His creatures to follow guidance and rise spiritually.

The clause, *Wilt thou then force men to become believers*?, is capable of two interpretations: (1) It may be taken as an argument in support of the statement made in the first part of the verse. In this case it would mean that God cannot resort to compulsion in the matter of faith, for to compel a person to accept a certain religion can serve no useful purpose. The Quran thus asks the Holy Prophet if he would like to force men to accept his faith against their will and, implying an answer in the negative,—for the Prophet would never countenance compulsion—the verse declares that God, Who knows the secrets of all hearts, cannot have recourse to compulsion. (2) The verse may also be taken to be addressed to each and every believer and to say to him that the denial of truth by disbelievers should not so enrage anyone as to make him resort to compelling men to accept it, arguing that when God, Who is the Lord and Master of all beings, does not use force, no mortal has any right to do so. Whichever of these two interpretations may be put upon this verse, it is clear beyond any shadow of doubt that Islam does not allow the use of force for its propagation.

1372. Commentary:

The subject matter of the preceding verse is continued here. The words, *And no soul can believe except by the permission of Allah*, provide the reason why compulsion should not be resorted to in matters of faith. The verse points out that it is not possible to attain true belief by the mere profession of certain doctrines with the tongue but by the permission of God i.e. by the observance of certain definite and fixed laws of God. Hence it is inconceivable that a person can be made a true believer by compulsion. You cannot intimidate or compel a person into believing a certain thing against his will. It is against the law of nature and against all known workings of the human mind.

The expression, *He makes His wrath descend on those who would not use their reason*, means that mere lip-profession of those who accept a thing without reason is of no value whatever. On the contrary, such men earn only the wrath of God for their insincere and hypocritical professions.

102. Say, [a]‘Consider what is *happening* in the heavens and the earth.’ [b]But Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe.1373

قُلِ انْظُرُوْا مَاذَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْاٰيٰتُ وَالنُّذُرُ
عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾

103. [c]What then do they expect save the like of the days of *punishment suffered by* those who passed away before them? Say, [d]‘Wait then, *and* I am with you among those who wait.’1374

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُوْنَ اِلَّا مِثْلَ اَيَّامِ الَّذِيْنَ
خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوْۤا اِنِّيْ
مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾

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[a]7:186. [b]54:6. [c]35:44. [d]11:123.

1373. Commentary:

The words, *Consider what is happening in the heavens and the earth,* mean that the factors which are destined to lead to the success and prosperity of the cause of the Holy Prophet are already apparent both in the heavens and the earth and so no compulsion is needed to help a naturally prospering cause. The words, *But Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe,* make the point still clearer, for they establish the fact that when the Quran asks men to consider the happenings of the universe it often means Signs and Warners.

1374. Important Words:

ايام (days) means here days of Divine punishment. See also 1:4.

Commentary:

Disbelievers are here told that, as in the end Divine punishment does overtake those who persist in rejecting the Prophets of God, therefore they need not demand its speedy arrival, because it is sure to come at its fixed time. It is strange that whereas disbelievers, who in the early days of the preaching of a new Message are the stronger party, display great impatience for the early coming of Divine punishment, the Prophet and his followers, who are the weaker party, do not wish that punishment should come soon. This impatience on the part of disbelievers on the one hand, and equanimity and calmness on the part of believers on the other, in themselves constitute a proof of the believers being in the right. The words put in the mouth of the Holy Prophet, viz. *Wait then, and I am with you among those who wait,* signify that, although I am being made the target of your tyrannies, yet I am waiting patiently. Why then should you, who are the stronger party and are leading peaceful lives, show such impatience?

104. Then shall We save Our Messengers and those who believe. [a]Thus *does it always happen*; it is incumbent on Us to save believers.[1375]

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّيْ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كَذٰلِكَ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ ع ۱۰ ۱۱ ۱۵

R. 11.

105. Say, "O ye men, if you are in doubt as to my religion, [b]then *know that* I worship not those whom you worship besides Allah, but I worship Allah *alone* Who causes you to die, and [c]I have been commanded to be of the believers.[1376]

قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِيْنِيْ فَلَاۤ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْنَ تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ اَعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۖۚ وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ ﴿۱۰۵﴾

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[a]30:48; 40:52; 58:22. [b]109:3. [c]6:164.

1375. Commentary:

Though the preceding verse referred only to the Holy Prophet, the verse under comment uses the word "Messengers" in the plural number in the expression, *Then shall We save Our Messengers*. The reason for using the plural number instead of the singular is twofold. Firstly, every Prophet represents in principle all other Prophets and the success or failure of one means the success or failure of them all. So if the Holy Prophet had come to grief and the cause of Islam had failed, the truth of all the Prophets would have become doubtful and obscure. Secondly, the use of the plural number also hints at the fact that in future, too, Prophets will appear among Muslims but these Prophets will be *Ummatī* Prophets, i.e. subservient to, and followers of, the Holy Prophet. The substitution of the word "believers" at the end of the verse in place of the word "Messengers" at its beginning also supports this interpretation, for it makes it clear that, while on the one hand these Prophets will be full-fledged heavenly Messengers, on the other, they will be believers in the Holy Prophet.

1376. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here made to say to disbelievers, "You say you have doubts concerning my religion, whereas my acting on this very religion has given me an invincible conviction of faith. I wonder why this religion should give rise to doubts in your minds?"

The expression, *causes you to die*, has been employed here to hint that the God of Islam was in the end going to punish disbelievers.

106. And [a]*I have also been commanded to say*: ‘Set thy face toward religion as one ever inclined *to God*, [b]and be not thou of those who ascribe partners *to Him*.**1377**

وَاَنْ اَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ۚ
وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾

107. [c]And call not, beside Allah, on any other that can neither profit thee nor harm thee. And if thou didst so, thou wouldst then certainly be of the wrongdoers.**1378**

وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ
وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۚ فَاِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَاِنَّكَ
اِذًا مِّنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾

108. [d]And if Allah touch thee with harm, there is none who can remove it but He: and if He desireth good for thee, there is none who can repel His grace.

وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ
اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَآدَّ
لِفَضْلِهٖ ؕ يُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ

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[a]30:31, 44. [b]28:88. [c]28:89. [d]6:18; 39:39.

1377. Commentary:

The expression, *be not thou of those who ascribe partners to Him,* does not mean, "do not worship false deities," for such an injunction is unnecessary after one has become حنيف (ever inclined to God). The truth is that the word مشرك has been used here in opposition to the word حنيف therefore the clause does not mean that the Holy Prophet should not worship idols (which he never did), but that he should not give the least thought or attention to things or beings other than God, for that too will constitute an act of *shirk* for a person of his spiritual eminence. Thus the Holy Prophet is bidden here to avoid even the slightest and the most hidden form of شرك (idol-worship).

1378. Commentary:

This verse further explains the one that precedes it. The words, *And call not, beside Allah on any other,* etc., do not mean that we should not call beside God on such things as can do us neither harm nor good. What is meant is that whatever is beside God possesses no independent power to do us harm or good, so we should not put our reliance on anything beside Him. The word ظالمين (wrongdoers) is here used in the sense of مشركين i.e. those who associate gods with God in any sense. This meaning is supported by a saying of the Holy Prophet which is to the effect that ظلم is a form of شرك (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*).

He causes it to reach whomsoever of His servants He wills. And He is the Most Forgiving, Merciful.[1379]

وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٨﴾

109. Say, ‘O ye men, now has the truth come to you from your Lord. So [a]whosoever follows the guidance, follows it only for the good of his own soul, and whosoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a keeper over you.’[1380]

قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِىْ
لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۚ
وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ؕ﴿١٠٩﴾

110. And [b]follow that which is revealed to thee and be steadfast until Allah give His judgement. And He is the Best of judges.[1381]

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰۤى اِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتّٰى
يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ ۚۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ ع ١١ ٦ ١٦

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[a]27:93; 39:42. [b]7:204.

1379. Commentary:

This verse sheds light on the fact that good and evil are of two kinds. There is a kind of good or evil which comes into being under the general divine law. It is subject to the laws of nature and therefore can be brought about or averted, through the efforts of man himself by defying or obeying the laws of nature, as the case may be. But there is another kind of good or evil which is brought about only by the special decree of God. By saying this the verse hints that God’s dealings with the Holy Prophet are subject to God’s special decree. This is why all the schemes and machinations of his enemies proved utterly futile.

1380. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is asked to tell disbelievers that personally he would gain or lose nothing by their good or bad actions because he had not been appointed a keeper over them. His duty was confined to the delivery of the Message entrusted to him.

1381. Commentary:

This, the concluding verse of the present *Sūrah,* briefly refers to the subject with which it began. The Holy Prophet is here told that the decree of God is bound to come to pass, for God is not only حکیم (Wise) but also خیر الحاکمین (the Best of Judges). So the Prophet should continue preaching the word of God and bear the persecution of his enemies with patience and fortitude until the decree of God was fulfilled.

In the words, *He is the Best of judges*, the Quran hints at the fact that God's decree is going to prove the best for His Prophet. Accordingly, we find that when that decree actually came to pass, the world was simply taken aback. Those who were thirsty for the Prophet's blood, became his most devoted followers; and the entire country of Arabia like unto the people of Jonah believed in him, and tribesmen from all parts of the land hastened to pay homage to him as their lord and master.

CHAPTER 11

HŪD

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Place and Date of Revelation.

This is a Meccan *Sūrah*. According to Ibn ʻAbbās, Al-Ḥasan, ʻIkrimah, Mujāhid, Qatādah and Jābir bin Zaid, the whole of it was revealed at Mecca. Ibn ʻAbbās, according to one report, however, makes an exception in the case of verse 13 which, he says, was revealed at Medina. According to Muqātil, the whole *Sūrah* belongs to the Meccan period, with the exception of vv.13, 18, & 115.

Subject Matter of the *Sūrah*:

The *Sūrah* discusses at length one of the subjects dealt with in the previous *Sūrah*. In the latter it was said that God deals with the enemies of His Prophets in three ways: (1) Some are completely destroyed; (2) others are wholly spared; and (3) yet others are partly destroyed and partly spared. In the present chapter, the Quran discusses the first category and states how God completely destroyed certain people so that no trace of them was left and He raised in their place another people who did not constitute the continuation of any previous people but introduced a new era.

The *Sūrah* also points out that one of the attributes of God is that He watches the evil actions of men and deals with them according to their actions. It further says that He makes provision for the guidance of men as circumstances demand and, as that provision is made for the good of man himself, therefore when he does not benefit by it, he perishes spiritually just as he would perish physically for lack of food. Again, it is pointed out that just as mankind does not come to an end when one generation of men passes away because it is succeeded by another generation, similarly, when one religious movement perishes, its place is taken by another.

The *Sūrah* further tells us that though worldly progress is possible even when people keep away from God, yet only those people are granted permanence in the earth who are honest not only in their worldly affairs but are also true to God. In other words, it is only those who are obedient to God and maintain their connection with Him whose name is perpetuated in world history. Then the *Sūrah* proceeds to give reasons why believers triumph over disbelievers and why the latter invariably perish in their struggle against the former. It illustrates this Divine practice by referring to different peoples who were once mighty in power and strong in numbers, but who met with destruction when they rose against the apparently humble followers of God's Messengers. Among them are mentioned the peoples of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot and Shu‘aib. Pharaoh and his people, who behaved arrogantly towards Moses and oppressed the Israelites, have also been mentioned. Reference has also been made to the great Patriarch Abraham, but that only incidentally in the course of the story of Lot. This has been followed by a brief account of Moses in his relationship not with the Israelites but with Pharaoh, which resulted in the destruction of Pharaoh and his arrogant people.

Then the believers are warned against associating with the people for whom Divine punishment has been decreed; for an association with such people would naturally involve them in the punishment meant for the latter. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet has been comforted and asked not to worry about the destruction of his people; for if his people were going to be destroyed, the people of many a Prophet before him were also destroyed. Lastly, the Holy Prophet has been cheered by the prophecy that great prosperity awaits his followers.

So many instances of Divine punishment have been cited in this *Sūrah* and such emphasis has been laid on the great responsibilities of the Holy Prophet that he is reported to have said: "The chapter Hūd has prematurely aged me" (Manthūr), meaning that the contents of the *Sūrah* had weighed so heavily on his mind that he had begun to feel early signs of physical weakness.

اٰیَاتُہَا ۱۲۴ سُوۡرَۃُ ہُوۡدٍ مَّکِّیَّۃٌ ۱۱ رُکُوۡعَاتُہَا ۱۰

(HŪD)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.**1382**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۝۱

2. [b]Alif Lām Rā. [c]*This is* a Book whose verses have been made unchangeable *and* then they have been expounded in detail. *It is* from One Wise, *and* All-Aware.**1383**

الٓرٰ ۟ کِتٰبٌ اُحۡکِمَتۡ اٰیٰتُہٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتۡ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡ حَکِیۡمٍ خَبِیۡرٍ ۝۲

1382. Commentary:

See 1:1.

1383. Important Words:

الر (*Alif Lām Rā*). For these abbreviated letters see 2:2 and 10:2. احکمت (made unchangeable) is formed from احکم which is derived from حکم. They say حکمه i.e. he prevented or restrained him from acting in an evil manner; or he turned him from wrongdoing. احکمه means, he made it firm, stable, strong or sound; he put it into a firm, stable, strong, sound or good state; it made him characterized by wisdom. احکمته التجارب means, trials have rendered him firm or sound or wise in judgement (Lane). The expression احکمت ایاته would thus mean: the verses of this Book are rendered sound and firm by arguments and proofs; or they are prevented from being corrupted; or the verses of this Book are characterized by wisdom; or the teachings of this Book withhold people from evil. See also 3:8.

فصلت (expounded in detail) is derived from فصل (*faṣala*) which means, he separated or divided a thing from another thing; he decided a dispute, etc. فصل الکلام (*faṣṣala*) means, he explained; or he made the speech distinct, clear or perspicuous. فصل الشیء means, he made the thing to consist of (or he divided the thing into) distinct portions or sections. تفصیل means, explaining distinctly or in detail.

خبیر (All-Aware) is derived from خبر (*khabura*) or خبر (*khabara*) which means, he knew or had knowledge of a thing with respect to its real state. خبرہ (*khabarahu*) also means, he tried or tested or made experiment of it.

خبیر means, knowing; possessing knowledge or information or possessing much knowledge with respect to internal qualities of things; informed. It is one of the attributive names of God meaning, He Who knows what has been and what is and what will be; or He Who well knows the internal qualities of things (Lane).

Commentary:

A comparison of this verse with 3:8

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[a]See1:1. [b]10:2; 12:2; 13:2; 14:2; 15:2. [c]3:8; 10:2.

3. *It teaches* that you should worship none but Allah. [a]I am to you a Warner, and a bearer of glad tidings from Him;[1384]

اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰہَ ؕ اِنَّنِیۡ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡہُ نَذِیۡرٌ وَّ بَشِیۡرٌ ۙ﴿۳﴾

[a] 2:120; 5:20; 7:189; 25:57; 34:29; 35:25.

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shows that the verses of the Quran which have been spoken of as متشابهات (susceptible of different interpretations) in the latter verse are here described by the word فصلت (have been expounded in detail). Thus the present verse helps to make clear that the term متشابهات in 3:8 represents the details of the Quranic teachings, and it is these detailed teachings which the opponents of Islam seek to criticize. The fundamental teachings of Islam are so unassailable that even its most inveterate enemy finds it difficult to take exception to them. But, in order to know the whole truth about Islam, a study of both its fundamental teachings and their details is necessary, and when the details are subordinated to the fundamentals, no ground is left for doubt or misgiving. For instance, the Quranic teaching about the punishment of various offences is sometimes criticized; but, when this question is considered in the light of its fundamental teachings, one is constrained to admit its absolute superiority. The fundamental teaching of Islam on this point is that the offender should be punished when punishment is calculated to produce good results, but that he may be pardoned and mercy shown to him when mercy is likely to lead to the desired results (42:41). This is the basic teaching of Islam about punishment, which may be inflicted or withheld as occasion demands. Similarly, Islam permits resort to arms in certain cases, which to some appears to be objectionable, but we cannot shut our eyes to the hard fact that sometimes war becomes unavoidable for the establishment and maintenance of justice and equity. The permission, on certain occasions, to have recourse to arms is thus like the surgeon's operation which may superficially appear to be cruel but is in reality an act of mercy.

The expression, *It is from One Wise and All-Aware,* means that these teachings proceed from One Who is both Wise and Knowing and therefore they can be relied upon as really useful and beneficial. As this chapter contains repeated references to Divine punishments, therefore, in order to forewarn the reader that these punishments were meted out to offenders under the Divine attribute of "Wisdom" and were not inflicted unjustly, it opens with the Divine attribute of حکیم (Wise). Similarly, by mentioning the Divine attribute of خبیر (All-Aware), the Quran reminds the reader that the Divine Possessor of this attribute, being fully aware of the true reality of things, cannot forego the punishment which the wickedness of evildoers rightly demands.

1384. Commentary:

The words, *you should worship*

4. And that [a]you seek forgiveness of your Lord, *and* then turn to Him. He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed term. And He will grant His grace to every one possessed of merit. And if you turn away,

وَّاَنِ اسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّكُمۡ ثُمَّ تُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَيۡهِ
يُمَتِّعۡكُمۡ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
وَّيُؤۡتِ كُلَّ ذِىۡ فَضۡلٍ فَضۡلَهٗ ؕ وَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا
فَاِنِّىۡۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ كَبِيۡرٍ ④

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[a] 11:53, 62; 71:11.

none but Allah, apparently show God to be selfish and standing in need of man's worship. Nothing can be farther from truth than such an idea. God needs no worship from man. On the contrary, it is man himself who needs the worship of God for his own moral and spiritual benefit (29:7 & 49:18), because worship does not consist merely in certain outward acts but extends to all those spiritual strivings which help to make man reflect in his person Divine attributes. In fact, as the Arabic word عبادة (worship) means full and total obedience and submission to God's will, it is clear that one who obeys God with thorough submissiveness and humility of heart and follows the will of his Creator fully and completely will not fail to imbibe Divine attributes and attain to the highest spiritual stature. This is something in which lies man's own good. God gains nothing from it. The mention in the Bible of man having been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) also points to the same great truth, i.e. that man has been created so that he may develop in himself the attributes of God. The words of the Bible must not, however, be taken literally, for God is free from all form.

The injunction to worship God alone means that God should always be kept in view, because the complete picture of an object can be drawn only when that object is held constantly before the eye. Hence, worship means constant viewing of the attributes of God and the imprinting of them on the mind. It is clear that in so doing we benefit ourselves alone and do no good to God. A saying of the Holy Prophet also corroborates the above conception of worship. When asked what عبادة (worship) meant, he is reported to have replied that it meant that one should worship God as if one was actually seeing Him, i.e. that different attributes of God should stand embodied before the mind's eye (Bukhārī, ch. on *Īmān*).

The Holy Prophet was a نذیر (Warner) in the sense that he cautioned and warned men to be on their guard against following evil ways and shunning good ones. And he was a بشیر (bearer of glad tidings) then surely, I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day.[1385]

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inasmuch as he pointed to them the way and provided for them the means of attaining both spiritual bliss and material prosperity.

1385. Important Words:

كبير (dreadful) is derived from كبر which means, he or it was or became great in estimation or rank or dignity; or he or it became big or large in corporeal substance or in years. They say كبر الامر i.e. the affair was or became of great moment. كبر عليه الامر means, the affair was or became difficult, hard, severe, grievous, distressing or burdensome to him. كبير means, great in corporeal substance; or in estimation or rank or dignity; great and noble; a lord or chief; greatest or oldest ancestor; old or advanced in age; also full-grown and adolescent; the most knowing or learned of a people; difficult, severe, grievous, distressing and burdensome. It is synonymous with عظيم with the difference that, whereas the latter word generally means great in comparison with others, the former means great in itself. الكبير as an epithet applied to God is generally considered to be synonymous with العظيم which means, the Incomparably Great (Lane).

Commentary:

In the previous verse, the attention of man was drawn to the object of his creation. But as he has to face many obstacles and impediments which hinder the realization of his ideal, he has therefore been advised in the present verse to seek God's help for the removal of those obstructions and hindrances which, in the form of the dross and rust of sin, continue to accumulate round his heart and eventually completely cover it. The Arabic word used here is استغفار (seeking forgiveness), which literally means "to pray to God that He should cover up". In this sense of the word the injunction embodied in the verse signifies that we should always pray to God that He should cover up and suppress those of our evil inclinations and desires which hinder us from attaining His nearness.

The expression, *then turn to Him,* means that when we have successfully suppressed and overcome our evil desires, we should turn to God that He may engender in our hearts such love for Himself as may help us to attain His nearness. This shows that it is only when evil desires, which excite the displeasure of God, have been successfully suppressed and the love of God becomes engendered in our hearts that we can truly turn to Him. Incidentally, the verse also shows that the stage of توبة (turning to God) comes after استغفار (seeking forgiveness and praying to God for the removal of the evil effects of our sins and the suppression of our evil inclinations).

Those who think that the Islamic

5. [a]To Allah is your return; and He has power over all things.[1386]

إِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝٥

6. Now surely, they fold up their breasts that they may hide themselves from Him. Aye, *even* when they cover themselves with their garments, He knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Surely, [b]He is well aware of what is in *their* breasts.[1387]

أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ يَثْنُوْنَ صُدُوْرَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوْا مِنْهُ ۭ أَلَا حِيْنَ يَسْتَغْشُوْنَ ثِيَابَهُمْ ۙ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ۚ إِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ۝٦

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[a]See10:5. [b]2:78; 16:24; 27:75; 28:70; 36:77.

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doctrine of توبة (turning to God) encourages sin are utterly ignorant of its real significance. It is indeed foolish to think that the man who is engaged in making a sincere effort to remove the evil effects of his sins and to suppress his evil desires is making only a lip-profession. In fact, توبة (repentance) does not consist in merely uttering words of repentance. It is an act of sincere and whole-hearted turning to God after His protection has been sought against the evil effects of past sins. What better way than this can there be to attain the nearness of God? The words, *an appointed term,* mean the period ordained by God for the followers of a Prophet. The words, *He will grant His grace to every one possessed of merit,* refer to spiritual blessings in both this life and the life to come.

A thing is said to be كبير (lit. great) both with regard to its extensiveness and its intensity and gravity. Hence the words, *the punishment of a dreadful (lit. great) day,* mean that in case the people rejected God's teaching, they would be visited with a punishment which would not only be of long duration but would also be most distressing, so that it would indeed be hard for disbelievers to bear.

1386. Commentary:

The expression, *To Allah is your return,* means that since you have finally to return to God and render your account to Him, there is no reason why you should not make preparation for that great meeting now. The words, *He has power over all things,* hint that since God has the power to give reward as well as to inflict punishment, there is no reason why you should not make yourselves deserving of His reward rather than of His punishment.

1387. Important Words:

يثنون (fold up) is derived from ثنى. They say ثنى الشيء i.e. he doubled or folded or bent the thing; he turned one part of it upon the other; he drew one of its two extremities to the other; he joined or adjoined one of the things to the other. ثنا زيدا means, he turned Zaid away or back from his course, or from the object of his want. ثنا صدره (lit. he folded his breast or bosom) means, he concealed enmity in his breast or bosom; or he folded up what was in it, in concealment. The expression انهم يثنون صدورهم means, surely they infold and conceal in their bosoms enmity and hatred; or they bend their breasts or bosoms and fold up and conceal what is therein (Lane & Aqrab).

يستغشون ثيابهم (they cover themselves with their garments). يستغشون is derived from استغشى which is again derived from غشى which means, it covered or concealed or overwhelmed. استغشى ثوبه or استغشى بثوبه means, he covered himself with his garment in order that he might not see or hear; or he put his garment as a covering over his ears—a phrase denoting a refusal to hearken, or, as some say, an allusion to running (Lane).

Commentary:

In the previous verse, mention was made of the obstacles which of themselves happen to come in the way of men, and of the means to remove them, while the present verse speaks of the obstacles which men themselves put in their way and which can be removed only if they desire to have them removed.

The expression يثنون صدورهم (they fold up their breasts) means that disbelievers keep their doubts and objections hidden in their minds and do not disclose them to others and have them removed. This is why they cannot see the right way. Unless one seeks the satisfaction of doubts by disclosing them to others who are in a position to remove them, one can never attain to truth.

The expression يستغشون ثيابهم (they cover themselves with their garments) is used when a person turns a deaf ear to another man and refuses to see the truth. Thus the second reason why disbelievers were debarred from accepting the truth was that they refused to listen to the Holy Prophet. They not only themselves abstained from listening to the Holy Prophet but also prevented others from doing so, declaring that what he preached was magic and would captivate their hearts if they hearkened to it (see 21:4; 41:27; 46:8; 74:25). This attitude of disbelievers in refusing to listen to the Holy Prophet was even more injurious for them than their keeping doubts hidden in their hearts, because there is a possibility, however remote, that a person who does not disclose his doubts to others may sometimes happen to listen to a discourse dealing with the subject about which he entertains doubts and may thus have them removed by chance, but there is no hope for a person who refuses to listen to the truth.

The verse points to the fact that disbelievers have to deal with a Being Who knows even their secret ideas and therefore they cannot take shelter under the false plea that, as the truth

7. And [a]there is no creature that moves in the earth but it is for Allah to provide it with sustenance. And He knows its lodging and its home. All *this* is *recorded* in a clear Book.[1388]

وَمَا مِنۡ دَآبَّةٍ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ اِلَّا عَلَی اللّٰہِ
رِزۡقُهَا وَیَعۡلَمُ مُسۡتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسۡتَوۡدَعَهَا ؕ
كُلٌّ فِیۡ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ (٧)

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[a] 11:57.

was not explained to them, they deserved to be excused if they did not accept it. A person who tries to evade the truth and deliberately shuts his eyes to it cannot excuse himself on the score of ignorance. Such men are as guilty as those who refuse to accept the truth after it has been fully explained to them. They alone can legitimately bring forward the plea of ignorance who make an honest effort to understand and arrive at the truth, but somehow or other fail to do so, or whom the Message of truth does not reach though they are ready to welcome it.

The words, *what they conceal and what they reveal,* may also refer to the concealed hatred which disbelievers harbour in their minds against the heavenly Messenger and to their open acts of hostility towards him.

The expression, ذات الصدور (what is in their breasts), refers to the hidden thoughts that dominate men. As the uppermost part of anything is called its صدر (Lane) and as the thoughts of a man naturally occupy the highest position in him—all his actions being subordinate to them—therefore, they are represented as being seated in his صدر of which the plural is صدور. The verse thus means that God has sent His Messenger because He knew the innermost corrupt condition of the minds of disbelievers, which demanded that a heavenly reformer should come. Therefore, they cannot say that they needed no reformer.

1388. Important Words:

مستقر (lodging) and مستودع (home) not only mean a place of temporary settlement and of permanent abode but also final or determined limit of a thing both as regards time or place; appointed term; end of one's course (Lane). See also 6:99.

Commentary:

The verse declares that God has provided sustenance for all His creatures but it rests with them to make proper use of it. He has provided the means of subsistence for even the worms and reptiles that dwell in the bowels of the earth. Human reason is at a loss to know how and whence the worms and insects found in such unlimited numbers on and inside the earth get their food. There are many insects about the nature of even whose food man is in the dark, but all are getting their sustenance from nature. An interesting instance

8. And [a]He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six

وَهُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ فِیۡ

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[a] 7:55; 10:4; 25:60.

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of how God makes provision for animals is furnished by the crops which men sow. While wheat makes an article of food for man, its stalk, leaves and husks provide food for animals. If God had not produced these things along with the grains of wheat, most men might have neglected their own ulterior interests and starved the dumb cattle.

God has created nothing without purpose. Even prickly shrubs form food for the camel and the goat, while the worms that grow in the human body get their food in the body itself. In fact, every species of worm, insect and animal has its particular food provided for it in nature. Even beasts of prey, which live on different kinds of animal diet seldom go hungry. Man who presumes to have solved the mysteries of the universe is not yet fully acquainted with all forms of life, to say nothing of knowing the different kinds of food on which they subsist. But God has made ample provision for them all.

What the Quran points out in this verse is that, when God has supplied the physical needs of the meanest of His creatures, He could certainly not have neglected to make provision for the moral and spiritual needs of the noblest of His creatures—man, who is the acme of His creation. It is unthinkable that when man was a mere clot of blood in the womb of his mother God supplied all his needs, but when he grew up to perfection and stood in need of guidance for the cultivation of his moral and spiritual faculties, He left him to his fate. Most assuredly God has provided both physical and spiritual sustenance for man; but it is for man to get it and make a proper use of it.

The words, *He knows its lodging and its home,* refer not only to the temporary and the permanent abode of every living thing but also to the utmost limit to which its powers can develop (see Important Words). The expression is thus intended to point out that only the Being Who knows the place where a thing lives and the utmost limits of its faculties can devise and provide the food best suited for it. To explain this point we may take the example of the body and the soul. We find that in teachings devised by human beings, either only the needs of the permanent abode, which relates to the human soul, have been taken into consideration, and the needs of the body, which serves as a shell for the soul and is thus man's temporary abode, have been neglected; or the betterment of the temporary abode i.e. the body, has received the whole attention and the requirements of the soul have been lost sight of. The truth is that with the help of his intellect alone it is not possible for man to provide for both his material and spiritual needs; for he does not know what will happen periods, and His Throne rests on water, [a]that He might prove you *to know* which of you is best in conduct. And if thou say, 'You shall surely be raised after death,' those who disbelieve will certainly say, 'This is nothing but clear deception.'[1389]

سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ وَّكَانَ عَرْشُهٗ عَلَى الْمَآءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ؕ وَلَئِنْ
قُلْتَ اِنَّكُمْ مَّبْعُوْثُوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ
لَيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا
سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ⑧

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[a] 5:49; 6:166; 67:3.

after death, and his spiritual needs concern primarily his life in the Hereafter. It is only God Who does so.

1389. Commentary:

This verse reminds us how God has created things by a gradual process of evolution to bring man into existence and to make provision for his progress. This gradual process of evolution has culminated in the creation of man. This shows that the real object of the creation of the whole universe was that man should come into being. Man is the real object of the creation of the universe because he has been endowed with an unlimited capacity for spiritual progress. It is, therefore, inconceivable that God, having endowed man with unlimited powers, should have neglected to provide means for his unending spiritual growth and development. For an explanation of the expression ستة ایام (six periods) see 7:55 and 10:4.

As water has been repeatedly described in the Quran as the source of all life (see 21:31; 25:55; 77:21 and 86:7) the words, *His Throne rests on water,* signify that all the great attributes of God have found their manifestation through "life" (i.e. living creatures) and above all through man, who is the culminating point of all life. The words that follow, viz. *that He might prove you to know which of you is best in conduct,* also corroborate the above explanation; otherwise, how can the works of man be tested by the resting of the Throne of God on material water? Indeed the passage can bear no other interpretation than this that it is through living creatures that God's attributes are manifested and that God desires to see who benefits most by His attributes.

The words, *His Throne rests on water,* may also mean that the attributes of God are dependent for their manifestation on His word, which has been compared at several places in the Quran to water. Water stands, therefore, here for "the Word of God" and the verse means that God has bound up the manifestation of His attributes with His Word, which indeed is the source of all spiritual life. This subject is further explained in 58:22 where it is laid down that

9. [a]And if We put off their punishment until a reckoned time, they would certainly say, ‘What withholds it?’ Now surely, on the day that it shall come

وَلَئِنۡ اَخَّرۡنَا عَنۡهُمُ الۡعَذَابَ اِلٰۤی اُمَّۃٍ
مَّعۡدُوۡدَۃٍ لَّیَقُوۡلُنَّ مَا یَحۡبِسُہٗ ؕ اَلَا یَوۡمَ
یَاۡتِیۡہِمۡ لَیۡسَ مَصۡرُوۡفًا عَنۡہُمۡ وَحَاقَ

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[a] 21:42; 46:27.

God’s Messengers on whom His word descends and their followers who benefit by the Divine Word are granted power and dominion over their enemies.

The verse may also be said to embody what may be called the Islamic theory of evolution. In this case، the word کان (is) will be rendered as "was" (for which see 2:35) and the verse would mean that God placed His Throne on water, viz. on the manifestation of life in this universe, so that the capacities of various animals might be compared and it might eventually become evident which of them deserved to be the aim and end of the whole of creation. In fact, the real and ultimate object of God in creating life was to bring into existence a being who might prove to be the best and highest manifestation of life fit to receive the impress of his Maker. This shows that the creation of man who was to prove the best of all creation, took place in the last cycle of life. Thus, although Islam does not accept the theory of evolution as commonly understood—that man is a development of a lower animal—yet it does teach that the creation of man formed the culminating point in the creation of life which began with the lower form of life and ended with the higher one, finding its consummation in man, and that this system of creation was from the very beginning intended to lead finally to the creation of man.

It is pointed out in the words, *You shall surely be raised after death,* that this system of creation itself shows that man should have a second life after death, for the creation of such a vast universe in which a being with a volition and independent will should live, makes it clear that the creation of that being is intended to serve a great purpose. But the life of this world is short-lived, a temporary place of tests and trials like the examination hall, over which hangs a veil of mystery and doubts, so much so that even the existence of God is sometimes denied. All this goes to prove beyond reasonable doubt that after this temporary abode of tests and trials man must pass on to his permanent or eternal abode of recompense. Hence (the verse says) how strange it is that, when people are told that creation has passed through a gradual process of development they readily admit it (even atheists accept the evolution theory) but when they are told what is but the natural sequence of this process, viz. that the life of man unto them, it shall not be averted from them, and that which they used to mock at shall encompass them.1390

بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ٩ ع

R. 2.

10. And [a]if We make man taste of mercy from Us, and then take it away from him, verily, he is despairing, ungrateful.1391

وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنٰهَا مِنْهُ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَيَئُوْسٌ كَفُوْرٌ ١٠

11. And if [b]after an adversity has touched him We cause him to taste of prosperity, he will assuredly say, 'Gone are the ills

وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنٰهُ نَعْمَآءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّاٰتُ عَنِّيْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ

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[a]41:52, [b]41:51.

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cannot come to a stop in this world, but must continue into another and higher life after death, they deny it.

1390. Important Words:

أمة (time) is derived from أم (*amma*). They say أمه (*ammahū*) i.e. he repaired or directed his course to him or it; he sought or aimed at it. أمة means, way, course or manner of acting; religion; a people or nation; a generation of men. It also means a time or a period of time as in 12:46 (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse points out that just as most people are in doubt about the life after death, similarly they labour under a delusion with regard to Divine punishment in this life. If punishment is delayed a little, they become impatient and begin to criticize and find fault with Divine Messengers, although the nature of this world as being an abode of trials demands that Divine punishment should be late in coming; for if there were no delay, the abode of trials would turn into a veritable abode of recompense.

It is strange that on the one hand people deny the existence of an abode of recompense and, on the other, by demanding from the Prophets of God a decisive punishment, admit that there should be such a thing as an abode of requital. The words, *that which they used to mock at shall encompass them,* show that disbelievers, while demanding the speedy arrival of punishment, do not do so in earnest, but only ridicule the warnings of Prophets about the impending punishment. They should know that their scoffing and jeering shall recoil on themselves and will serve only to expedite the threatened punishment.

1391. Commentary:

See the next verse.

from me.' Lo! he is exultant *and* boastful;[1392]

لَفَرِحٌ فَخُوۡرٌ ۙ⑪

12. [a]Save those who are steadfast and do good works. It is they who will have forgiveness and a great reward.[1393]

اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ صَبَرُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةٌ وَّاَجۡرٌ كَبِيۡرٌ ⑫

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[a] 41:9; 84:26; 95:7.

1392. Commentary:

Both attitudes of foolish elation and of abject despair described in this and the previous verses are assumed by those who give themselves up to disbelief and turn their backs on Divine revelation. They are carried away by the smallest change in their fortunes, whether for good or ill. If some distress happens to afflict them, they give way to despair, while they become foolishly elated with pride if some success or happiness comes their way. This is due to their lack of proper understanding of the law of God, which is to the effect that this life is subject to change and that sorrows and periods of good fortune come upon man to try his mettle and make him improve his moral and spiritual condition. But a disbeliever who fails to understand the purpose of God, instead of benefiting by his state of prosperity or affliction, often lets it overwhelm him.

1393. Commentary:

This verse is a continuation of the preceding one and points out that although people lacking in true belief become elated or give way to despair at the smallest change in their circumstances, such is not the case with true believers. They do not allow sorrow or joy to get the better of them, but keep them under strict control. Sorrow cannot make them give way to despair and despondency. They remain patient under adversity and face it with courage. Nor can prosperity make them proud or haughty. On the contrary, they turn the favours of God to good account and increase in piety and righteousness.

The words, *It is they who will have forgiveness and a great reward,* describe the true recompense of believers. As they remain patient under adversities and afflictions which befall them in consequence of their own mistakes and faults, God rewards their patience by forgiving their errors and by covering up their faults and weaknesses. Similarly, as they do not become conceited and proud by reason of the favours which God confers on them, but employ them for righteous ends, therefore God adds to His favours by conferring upon them still greater blessings.

13. [a]*They imagine that* thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee; and thy bosom is becoming straitened thereby because they say, [b]'Wherefore has not a treasure been sent down to him or an angel come with him?' [c]Verily, thou art only a Warner, and Allah is Guardian over all things.**1394**

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌۢ بَعْضَ مَا يُوْحٰۤى اِلَيْكَ
وَضَآئِقٌۢ بِهٖ صَدْرُكَ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا لَوْلَاۤ
اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ اَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهٗ مَلَكٌ ؕ
اِنَّمَاۤ اَنْتَ نَذِيْرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَّكِيْلٌ ؕ ⑬

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[a]17:74. [b]17:94; 25:9. [c]13:8.

1394. Important Words:

فلعلك (thou art now perhaps). The word لعل is used to denote either a state of hope or of fear, whether that state pertains to the speaker or to the addressee or to someone else. In the Quranic expression فلعلك تارك بعض مايوحى اليك (thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee) the word لعل has been used to signify that "the people imagine that thou art now perhaps going to abandon, etc." (Mufradāt). See also 2:22.

كنز (treasure) is the noun-infinitive from كنز (*kanaza*). They say كنز المال i.e. he buried the property or treasure in the earth; he collected the property and treasured it, or he hoarded it or stored it in secret. كنز الرمح means, he stuck or fixed the spear in the ground. كنز التمر means, he stored or packed up the dates (in the receptacle). كنز (*kanz*) means, treasure; property buried in the earth; any property whereof the portion that should be given in alms is not given; property that is preserved in a receptacle; anything abundant and collected together; gold and silver; a treasure of knowledge or science; that in which property is preserved or that in which property is buried or hoarded in secret (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is a peculiarity of Quranic diction that sometimes it omits to give the question and only gives the answer, the question being implied in the answer itself. The present verse constitutes an example of this style. In the previous verse believers were promised *forgiveness and a great reward*. Thereupon disbelievers asked the Holy Prophet in a jeering and ironical manner, "You say your followers will get a great reward and their sins will be forgiven. We know nothing about the forgiveness of their sins. But where is the promised reward of which we do not see the slightest sign? You do not have even the money which you need so badly, nor do the angels descend from heaven to help you." The Quran turns the tables upon the disbelievers and answers their irony, with an irony, saying, "How weighty indeed is the objection of these people and perhaps, o Prophet, from fear of being unable to answer it, you would hide a part of Our revelation which contains prophecies regarding the prosperity and triumph of Islam!" meaning that such a thing can never be.

The verse is capable of another interpretation also. In this case the word لعل would be taken to refer to the hope of disbelievers that the Holy Prophet may, out of fear of their objections, suppress part of the Divine revelation. The verse declares such hopes to be vain and futile, for the Holy Prophet was "only a warner," and the function and duty of a warner is only to issue the warning and deliver his message faithfully; he has no right to suppress any portion of the message. Again, by using the words "only a Warner" the verse also hints that the Holy Prophet did not claim to be God so that the treasures of the earth might be under his control; he was only a human being. If it be said here that believers who were promised "a great reward" (see the preceding verse) were also human beings like the Holy Prophet, it should be remembered that they were promised the reward not immediately but after they had established their title to it by displaying patience and steadfastness under trials and hardships for a considerable time. So disbelievers could demand from the Holy Prophet clear and palpable signs of the prosperity promised to him only when the promised time had come and not earlier. To come attended with power and glory in the very beginning is a sign of personal authority which belongs to God alone and not to any human being."

The words, *Allah is Guardian over all things,* are intended to point to the fact that all these promises will certainly come to pass. The Holy Prophet will assuredly get both مغفرة (lit. covering up) and a great reward, and the angels of God will undoubtedly descend to bring his work to completion and make null and void the machinations of his enemies. Not only will he himself be favoured with a great reward, but his followers and disciples also would become rulers and kings. Any fair-minded and impartial person can see that both these promises were literally fulfilled.

Some hostile critics of Islam have pretended to infer from this verse that the Holy Prophet was actually prepared to abandon a portion of the Quran out of fear of the objections of his opponents. But the context spurns this baseless interpretation. Can any reasonable person imagine that the demand for the descent of helping angels or for the possession of a treasure was such that, on account of it, the Holy Prophet should, in any way, have become prepared to suppress part of Divine revelation, or that he was unaware of the fact that he was only a warner whose duty was

14. [a]Do they say, ‘He has forged it?’ Say, ‘Then bring ten Chapters like it, forged, and call on whom you can beside Allah, if you are truthful.’**1395**

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ فَأْتُوْا بِعَشْرِ
سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ مُفْتَرَيٰتٍ وَّ ادْعُوْا مَنِ
اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

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[a]2:24; 10:39; 17:89; 52:34-35.

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to deliver the Message, whatever it might be? Again, did he not know that God had clearly spoken to him saying He Himself was "Guardian over all things"? So the words, *thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee,* contain only a vain hope on the part of the disbelievers that the Prophet might give up part of his revelation; they do not at all find any intention or readiness on his part to do so. Do not these critics know that when at Mecca a deputation of the Quraish waited on the Holy Prophet and asked him to give up preaching against their idols and threatened to crush him and his tribe in case he refused to do so, the prompt answer he gave was that even if they put the sun on his right and the moon on his left he would not swerve a hair’s breadth from the teachings which God had given him? Could he, whom the threats or cajolery of the Quraish at a time when he was extremely weak could not induce to give up his preaching, have become so unnerved by these silly objections as to become ready to conceal a part of the Divine Word?

The verse that follows also gives the lie to such an inference, for it contains a challenge to the world to produce ten *Sūrahs* like any ten *Sūrahs* of the Quran. If there had been any doubt in the Prophet’s mind concerning any portion of the Quran, could that very portion possibly have been followed by a challenge like this? This challenge shows that he believed in the truth of every word of the Quran with a conviction firm as a rock.

1395. Commentary:

This verse corroborates the interpretation put on the previous one. The latter gave two answers to the disbelievers’ vain hope that the Holy Prophet might abandon a portion of the Quran for fear of their objections, viz.: (1) that the Holy Prophet was only a Warner; he did not lay claim to Godhead that he might be required to have with him treasures and angels; (2) that he was only the bearer of a Message from God and his duty was confined to delivering that Message to the people. Now disbelievers could have replied to these arguments by saying that his claim to have come from God was but an empty assertion and that he was an impostor, as he was not

15. And if they do not respond to you, [a]then know that it has been revealed *replete* with Allah’s knowledge and that there is no God but He. Will you then submit?**1396**

فَاِلَّمۡ يَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡا لَكُمۡ فَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّمَاۤ
اُنۡزِلَ بِعِلۡمِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنۡ لَّاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ‌ ۚ
فَهَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّسۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

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[a] 4:167.

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attended with any special power. The verse under comment answers this objection by saying that although the Holy Prophet did not possess treasures of gold or silver, yet he possessed vast spiritual treasures the like of which were not possessed by the whole world collectively; and that those treasures were embodied in the Quran. So if they objected that the Holy Prophet was not a true Prophet and that certain portions of his Message were defective and needed to be altered, then let them bring forward a work comparable not to the whole of the Quran, but only to ten such chapters of it as they deemed to be defective. If, however, they could not produce a book comparable even to these so-called defective portions, which they thought needed to be changed, then they would have to admit that the Prophet of Islam did indeed possess a treasure the like of which none could produce. For full discussion of this subject, see under 2:24 where all similar verses of the Quran have been collectively treated.

1396. Commentary:

Naturally the question arises here whether the challenge contained in the preceding verse was confined to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet or whether it extended even to the later ages. This question has been answered in the present verse by the use of the plural pronoun "you" in the clause, *And if they do not respond to you,* thus showing that the challenge was not confined to the time of the Holy Prophet but extended to all time. If the challenge had been confined only to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, the words used would have been "if they do not respond to *thee*" and not as they are. The use of the plural pronoun shows that Muslims in every age can deliver this challenge to disbelievers and the verse guarantees that the Quran will ever stand unrivalled in its manifold excellences.

The words, *then know that it has been revealed replete with Allah’s knowledge,* mean that if the opponents of Islam do not accept this challenge, it will clearly establish that the Quran comprises the special knowledge of God, and contains matters which are beyond human ken, being undiscoverable by man; hence their inability to produce a book like it.

The expression, *that there is no god but He,* indicates that the inability of men of all ages to produce a book

16. [a]Whoso desires the present life and its embellishment, We will fully repay them for their works in this *life* and they shall not be wronged therein.[1397]

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا
نُوَفِّ اِلَيْهِمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيْهَا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا
لَا يُبْخَسُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

17. [b]Those are they who shall have nothing in the Hereafter save the Fire, and that which

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا
النَّارُ ۖ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوْا فِيْهَا وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا

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[a]2:201; 17:19. [b]17:19.

like the Quran will also prove that there is no god beside Allah; for, if there had been other gods, they and their votaries would have accepted the challenge and, by producing through their cumulative efforts a work like the Quran, would have demonstrated the hollowness of this challenge. Complete silence on their part is sure evidence of the fact that there is no God beside Allah and that He has no equal.

It is disbelievers who are addressed in the closing words, *Will you then submit,* and they are asked whether they will not join the fold of Islam now that this unaccepted challenge has proved that the Quran is indeed the Word of God.

1397. Commentary:

It is clear from this verse that those who desire the present life and its riches and strive after it get their full share of it. No one is deprived of what he strives after. The worldly prosperity and material advancement of Christian nations is sometimes adduced as an evidence of the truth of Christianity. This verse exposes the falsity of this inference. The attainment of worldly prosperity is no proof of the fact that one is following the right religion, for God has appointed laws for every kind of progress and anyone who observes the laws appointed for the material progress of man can attain worldly felicity. The mere attainment of worldly prosperity, unless it is attended by other clear signs, is therefore no proof of godliness. It must, however, be remembered that in this life one gets the reward of only those deeds which one does purely for this world. It is to this important point that the words, *their works in this life,* refer.

The expression, *they shall not be wronged therein,* means that disbelievers will not be deprived of the rewards of their work in this life, simply for refusing to believe in God's Messengers. Disbelievers are not punished in this life for mere disbelief or mere denial of truth for which punishment is reserved in the next life. In this world they are only punished when they make mischief and create disorder and persecute believers.

they wrought in this *life* shall come to naught, and vain shall be that which they used to do.**1398**

كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. [a]Can he, then, who possesses a clear proof from his Lord, [b]and *to testify to whose truth* a witness from Him shall follow him, and who was preceded by the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy, *be an impostor?* Those *who consider these matters* believe therein, and whoever of the *opposing* parties disbelieves in it, Fire shall be his promised place. [c]So be not thou in doubt about it. Surely, it is the truth from thy Lord; but most men do not believe.**1399**

اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَيَتْلُوْهُ
شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰۤى اِمَامًا
وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ
يَّكْفُرْ بِهٖ مِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهٗ ۚ
فَلَا تَكُ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۗ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ
رَّبِّكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

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[a] 47:15. [b] 46:11; 61:7. [c] 2:148; 10:95.

1398. Commentary:

Disbelievers are here told that if they do not embrace Islam, they will of course not be deprived of worldly goods which they might have earned by the sweat of their brow, but they will surely remain deprived of God's blessings.

The pronoun ها (this) in فيها (in this) may refer to either the present life mentioned in the previous verse or the Hereafter in the verse under comment. In the former case, the clause, *that which they wrought in this life shall come to naught,* would mean that, as they had been rewarded in the present life for the works which they did for this life, therefore these works would prove of no avail to disbelievers in the life to come. In the latter case, the clause would mean that, as their deeds for the present life were in accordance with the laws of God, therefore, they got their reward for them; but as the deeds which they did for the next life were in defiance of Divine laws, therefore they would do them no good and would fail to serve the purpose for which they were apparently meant.

1399. Commentary:

This verse embodies three

important criteria by which the truth of the Quran and that of the Holy Prophet can be tested, and declares that he who satisfies these three criteria cannot be an impostor.

There are three classes of men whom a Divine Message can possibly concern:(1) the contemporaries of a Messenger of God, to whom the Message is directly addressed; (2) the generations yet unborn who are to receive the Message in the future; (3) the past generations to whom their Prophet gave the news that a Messenger was to come. If these three classes of witnesses bear testimony to the truth of a claimant to prophethood, there can remain no doubt about his truth. The faith of the last-mentioned class of people, i.e. those who expect the advent of a Messenger of God, has its basis in past prophecies about his advent, while the first-mentioned class, i.e. the contemporaries of a claimant, judge his claim (a) by the touchstone whether he possesses in his own person any proof which testifies to his truth, or (b) by the prophecies of earlier Scriptures about the advent of a Divine Messenger. Lastly, there is the second class of people, i.e. those yet unborn who in their time look upon the signs witnessed by the contemporaries of a claimant as mere stories, and confine their scrutiny to the change brought about by the claimant—the fruit of his reformatory efforts. In fact, succeeding generations attach more importance to the fruits of the labours of a Divine Messenger and to the results of his mission than to anything else. If his Message continues to bear fruit down to their time, they come to realize that it is a truly useful thing and concerns them as much as it did past generations.

In point of importance, pride of place belongs to internal evidence, that is, the evidence which a claimant possesses in his own person, because such evidence serves as a clear proof not only for the contemporaries of the claimant but also for the generations to come and because it relieves seekers after truth of the trouble of turning to other things for guidance, it being in itself a sufficient proof of the truth of the claimant. This kind of proof is referred to in the words, *Can he who possesses a clear proof from his Lord be an impostor?*

The second evidence, which is also second in importance, of the truth of a Divine claimant pertains to the results produced by his Message and the fruits of his labours; for in the absence of this evidence, the practical value of a Message claimed to be Divine becomes doubtful in the eyes of later generations. In fact, the intrinsic truth of a Message does not constitute a sufficient incentive for acting upon it. It has to be shown that it is also meant for the recipient and for the age in which he lives and that it has not been superseded by a later Message. The fact that a Message continues to bear fruit suffices to establish the fact that it is as practicable and as useful at present as it was in the past. This kind of evidence is referred to in the words, *and a witness from Him shall follow him.*

Last in point of importance is the evidence which relates to prophecies holding hope of a future reformer and a future Message. The evidence of such prophecies is also useful, for it keeps the minds of men prepared for the acceptance of the Message, although naturally only those people benefit by it in whose time the expected Message actually makes its appearance. This kind of evidence is hinted at in the words, *and who was preceded by the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy.*

All these three kinds of evidence have been adduced in this verse in support of the Holy Prophet and the Quranic Message. The Quran possesses strong internal evidence of its Divine origin; the Scriptures that preceded it bear clear witness to its truth; and it was also to bear fruit in the future in a way that nobody could have any reasonable ground to reject it. Similarly, the Holy Prophet who brought this Message also possesses this triple evidence which clearly proves him to be a true Messenger of God.

The words, *a witness from Him (God) shall follow him (the Holy Prophet)*, also point to the appearance of a great Reformer in the Latter Days who was to come as "a witness" to bear testimony to the truth of the Holy Prophet. It is worth noting that the person who was to appear after the Holy Prophet to bear testimony to his truth has been called a شاهد (a witness) and it is evident that a witness is needed only when the continued practicability and usefulness of a Message is called in question. It is evident, therefore, that after the advent of the Holy Prophet a Messenger was needed only at a time when there should arise about the Quran the question whether it was still worthy of being acted upon. It is well known that such a question never arose about the Quran during the last 1350 years, and it is only in the present time that doubts have begun to be expressed about this claim of the Quran with persistence from all quarters. There is a section of Muslims themselves who hold the view that some teachings of the Quran, particularly with regard to the five daily Prayers, the amputation of the hands of a thief, polygamy, purdah, usury, etc., need alteration or amendment. Then there are the followers of claimants like Bahā'ullāh, who believe that the Law of Islam has become abrogated and they seek to introduce a new Law in its place. Last of all, the so-called higher critics of the west question the authenticity of some historical facts mentioned in the Quran as well as the practicability of some of its teachings. Such a state of affairs never existed before the present age and therefore, truly speaking, no "witness" was needed before now.

The words منه (from Him) in the expression, *a witness from Him*, clearly show that the promised witness was to be a heavenly Messenger. This heavenly Messenger is Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement, who appeared at a time when the teachings of Islam had begun openly to be declared unpractical and impracticable and the object of whose advent was to bear witness to the

19. And [a]who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah? Such shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, [b]'These are

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ
الْاَشْهَادُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰى

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[a]6:22; 10:18; 61:8. [b]39:61.

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truth of Islam by means of clear proofs and fresh heavenly signs.

It should also be remembered that the words, *a witness from Him shall follow him,* promised the appearance of a person who was to invite men to accept and follow the Quran and not of one who was to abrogate its teachings. Thus, incidentally, the verse furnishes an irrefutable argument against the claims of Baha'ullah.

The third evidence in support of the truth of the Quran and of the Holy Prophet lies in the fact that their advent was predicted by previous Prophets. The Book of Moses forms the most conspicuous example of it. It contains clear prophecies about the Holy Prophet and the Quran. Among others, the reader is referred to Deut. 18:18.

The Book of Moses is here called "a guide" because it serves as a guide to the truth of Islam. It is "a mercy" in the sense that it has made it easy for men to accept the truth in four different ways: (1) by means of prophecies which point to the truth of the Holy Prophet; (2) by laying down criteria by means of which the truth of a Prophet can be tested; (3) by enabling men to compare the teachings of the two Books; and (4) by helping to explain the fundamentals of the Law.

The word احزاب (opposing parties) generally signifies the parties that oppose the Prophets. As the Holy Prophet was raised for the whole of mankind, the words would here signify the followers of all the religions of the world other than Islam.

The words, *be not thou in doubt about it,* are addressed to the reader and not to the Holy Prophet. These words are preceded by the words, *those who consider these matters believe therein,* to point out that as there has already come into existence a party of men who believe in the Quran and the Holy Prophet, it is highly unreasonable to think that, whereas the evidences mentioned above have succeeded in bringing into existence a party of firm believers, the Prophet himself to whom those evidences were revealed should remain in doubt about their Divine origin. These words, therefore, cannot be said to have been addressed to the Holy Prophet. They are undoubtedly addressed to each and every reader of the Quran.

they who lied against their Lord.' Now surely, the curse of Allah is on the unjust:1400

رَبِّهِمْ ۚ اَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾

20. [a]Who turn *men* away from the path of Allah and seek to make it crooked. And these it is who disbelieve in the Hereafter.1401

الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ؕ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ
كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾

21. Such can never frustrate *God's plans* in the land, nor have they any friends beside Allah. Punishment will be doubled for them. [b]They can neither hear, nor can they see.1402

اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِي
الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
اَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ يُضٰعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ؕ مَا وقف لازم
كَانُوْا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوْا
يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾

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[a]3:100; 7:46; 14:4; 16:89. [b]26:213.

1400. Commentary:

The verse tells us that it is quite easy to distinguish a true claimant from a false one. Those who falsely lay claim to prophethood are most unjust and the unjust are under God's curse. So it is not difficult to distinguish between true and false prophets. One can know false prophets from their very appearance and their very circumstances.

The word الاشهاد (witnesses) may here refer to true Prophets who will give the lie to their rejecters by pointing to the accursed condition of false prophets and inviting comparison with them.

1401. Commentary:

The purport of this verse is that the enemies of truth not only hinder men from the path of God but also adopt ways and means by which the beauty of God's word may be spoiled or may remain hidden; and, instead of appearing attractive, it may look hideous and repulsive. This is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the enemies of truth.

1402. Commentary:

Those who forge lies against God (see v. 19) can never succeed in their wicked plans but only become involved in the meshes of their own schemes and stratagems.

God cannot be their friend and helper because of their fabricating lies against Him, and as God, the Lord of the universe, is angry with them, their own friends and

22. [a]It is these who have ruined their souls, and that which they fabricated shall fail them.[1403]

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ خَسِرُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ
وَضَلَّ عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَفۡتَرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

23. [b]Undoubtedly, it is they who shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.[1404]

لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّهُمۡ فِي الۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ
الۡاَخۡسَرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

24. Verily, [c]those who believe and do good works, and humble themselves before their Lord—

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
وَاَخۡبَتُوۡۤا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ

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[a]7:54; 10:31. [b]16:110. [c]2:83; 3:58; 4:58; 13:30; 22:57; 29:8; 30:16; 42:23.

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sympathizers can be of no help to them.

The word يضاعف (will be doubled) being derived from ضعف (for which see 3:131), which means both "the double of a thing" or "an unlimited addition," is used here in both these senses. The punishment of disbelievers will be doubled in the sense that they will be punished both for their own sins and for the sins of those whom they misled. In the second sense, the verse means that their punishment will continue to increase absolutely; for by preaching and disseminating a false teaching they sowed the seeds of evil in the world, and as long as that evil subsists their punishment will continue.

Surprise is expressed in the words, *They can neither hear, nor can they see,* at those who falsely claim to be Divine Messengers. It is pointed out that although both true and false prophets have passed before them, yet they would not try to see what a miserable end the false prophets came to nor would they listen to the stories of their lives.

1403. Important Words:

For the meaning of the word خسر (*khasira*) see 6:13. The word is really intransitive, though for the sake of convenience it has been translated here as transitive.

1404. Important Words:

لاجرم (undoubtedly). They say جرمه i.e. he cut it or he cut it off. جرم لاهله means, he acquired or earned for his family. جرم also means, he committed a fault or sin or crime. The expression لاجرم means, there is no avoiding (lit. cutting) it; or it is absolutely necessary; verily or truly. It also sometimes gives the sense of "nay" (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that though disbelievers may do a slight harm to the Prophets of God in this life, in the life to come they alone will suffer.

these are the inmates of Heaven; therein shall they abide.[1405]

25. [a]The case of the two parties is like the case of the blind and the deaf, and the seeing and the hearing. Is the case of the two alike? Will you not then understand?[1406]

الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

مَثَلُ الْفَرِيْقَيْنِ كَالْاَعْمٰى وَالْاَصَمِّ

وَالْبَصِيْرِ وَالسَّمِيْعِ ؕ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيٰنِ

مَثَلًا ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ ع ۲ ۱۶ ۲

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[a] 13:17; 35:20-21.

1405. Important Words:

اخبتوا (humbled themselves) is derived from خبت. They say خبت ذكره meaning, the mention of him or it was or became concealed, i.e. he or it was or became obscure and of no repute or became concealed. اخبت الى الله means, he was or became lowly, humble or submissive in heart and obedient to God; or he humbled or abased himself to his Lord; or he trusted his Lord. خبت (*khabtun*) means, a low or depressed tract of land; or a wide and low tract of ground; or a soft tract of ground which is easy to walk through (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that in order to attain to the highest stages of spiritual progress, mere faith and good works are not sufficient; perfect conviction, complete submission and full trust in God and sincere love for Him are also essential. Just as a child is happy and satisfied only when it is in the lap of its mother, similarly he who desires to make real spiritual progress should humble himself before God, place complete trust in Him and always turn to Him for help.

1406. Commentary:

This verse beautifully contrasts faith and disbelief. A believer is here represented as one who is in perfect possession of the faculties of sight and hearing, while the disbeliever is likened to a blind and deaf man. Certainly there is a world of difference between them. The epithets "blind" and "deaf" for disbelievers have not been used by way of abuse, but are meant to throw light on the real nature of disbelief.

The difference between a spiritually blind man and one who can see is that the former cannot see the spiritual light that comes from God, while the latter can. Similarly, whereas the former gropes, stumbles and falters on the way to his destination, the latter sees his way clear to it and reaches it directly. Moreover, a blind man cannot distinguish a friend from a foe, and might mistake one for the other, while the seeing man can never make such a mistake.

Similar differences exist between those who follow a true religion and those who reject it. The follower of a true religion knows the Will of God, which serves as a beacon of light for the spiritual wayfarer. But one who rejects truth loses his spiritual vision and thus is deprived of the means to know the Will of his Creator. Similarly, he who has accepted truth, being a seeker after Divine revelation, does not stumble or stagger on the way to his destination, but arrives at it straight away. On the contrary, those who seek to find truth by the unaided help of their own reasoning faculties may sometimes succeed in finding it, but after a good deal of stumbling and groping in the dark. The difference is well illustrated by the statutory prohibition in the United States of America of alcoholic drink in the past few years. Islam prohibited drinking outright, with the result that the Muslim world totally abandoned it. The non-Muslim world has only now begun to realize its evils after an experiment extending over hundreds of years. Another vital difference between a believer and a disbeliever is that the former takes his stand on the firm rock of some recognized truth about which there exists no dispute in his mind, but the latter does not know where he stands, with the result that in order to refute a truth, he sometimes happens to attack even those principles to which he himself subscribes. This is why the Quran repeatedly reminds its opponents that, while attacking Islam, they very often attack their own beliefs and principles.

Believers and disbelievers have also been here compared to the hearing and the deaf. The difference between a man who has ears and one who is deaf is that the former, being able to hear what others have to say, benefits by their experience, while the latter can derive no such benefit. This constitutes one of the chief differences between Islam and other Faiths, and between Muslims and non-Muslims. The teachings of Islam comprise all truths—even those that are found in other religions—and a Muslim is enjoined to get hold of truth wherever he finds it and to make it his own, while a non-Muslim remains contented with his own antiquated and outworn ideas and turns a deaf ear to all others. It is to this peculiarity of Islam that the Holy Prophet has alluded in his famous saying: "A word of wisdom is the lost property of a believer; he gets hold of it wherever he finds it" (Tirmidhī, ch. on *'Ilm*).

In short, the sign of a true religion is that it is catholic and broad-minded and embraces in itself all truths; while a false religion is characterized by narrow-mindedness and perversity. Thus, the very thing which is criticized by the opponents of Islam as one of its defects is claimed here as an excellence. Islam has been accused of plagiarism, but it answers this charge by saying that it is not like a deaf man who cannot hear and therefore is incapable of benefiting by the knowledge and experience of others, but, like a person who is in perfect possession of the power of hearing, it listens to what others have to say and thus supplements and perfects its own store of knowledge. This is why the Quran has not only collected in itself all such teachings of other divinely inspired religions as are fundamentally good and

R. 3.

26. And [a]We sent Noah to his people, *and he said*, 'Truly, I am a plain Warner to you,[1407]

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦٓ إِنِّى لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

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[a] 7:60; 23:24; 71:3.

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beneficial but has also added to them such new truths as are not to be found in any other Faith.

The epithets "hearing" and "deaf" point to another contrast also. In Islam, the door of Divine revelation is open, and spiritually speaking only such an ear can be said to be gifted with the faculty of "hearing" as listens to the voice of God. In fact, it is for the purpose of hearing the sweet voice of God that the ear has been primarily created. So the ear which does not hear the voice of God is a deaf ear. Similarly, it is to point to this great difference that believers and disbelievers have been respectively likened to "the seeing" and "the blind." In Islam the door of heavenly signs and miracles is ever open and he alone can be truly said to be "seeing" who sees the fresh signs of God. The eye which refuses to see the signs of God is indeed a blind eye.

1407. Important Words:

مبین (plain) is derived from ابان which again is derived from بان for which see 2:169. مبین gives three meanings: (1) plain and clear; (2) he who or that which makes a thing clear by giving reasons and arguments; (3) he who or that which cuts something asunder.

Commentary:

In the previous verse it was stated that disbelievers did not care either to ponder over the inglorious end to which false prophets and their followers came or to the great success attained by true Prophets. The former class of people were likened to the blind and the deaf and the latter to the hearing and the seeing. With the present verse begin some illustrations of these two classes of men. The first illustration is that of Noah, who was one of the great Prophets of God.

All Prophets of God are نذیر مبین (plain Warners) i.e. (1) there is no secrecy about their teaching and manner of work. Unlike false pretenders, they do not conceal their teaching. With them everything is fair and above board. (2) Their teaching is also based on reason and argument. Thus, unlike the warning of the false prophets, the warning of the true Prophets causes no despair or despondency among their followers. The Holy Prophet has strongly condemned warnings which occasion despair. He is reported to have said: من قال هلك القوم فهو اهلكهم i.e. "He who says that the people have perished, it is really he himself who causes them to perish by so saying" (Muslim, ch. on *Birri Waṣ-Ṣilah*). Such a person, in fact, makes people lose faith and confidence in themselves and makes them despair of their future. Lost in the slough of despond, they begin to think lightly of sin and iniquity and feel hopelessly discouraged and

27. [a]That you worship none but Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day.’**1408**

اَنْ لَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّیْٓ اَخَافُ
عَلَیْكُمْ عَذَابَ یَوْمٍ اَلِیْمٍ ﴿۲۷﴾

28. [b]The chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, replied, ‘We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves, and [c]we see that none have followed thee but those who, to all outward appearance, are the meanest of us. And we do not see in you any superiority over us; nay, we believe you to be liars.’**1409**

فَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ مَا
نَرٰىكَ اِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرٰىكَ
اتَّبَعَكَ اِلَّا الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ اَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِیَ
الرَّاْیِ ۚ وَمَا نَرٰی لَكُمْ عَلَیْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍۭ
بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كٰذِبِیْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

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[a]7:60; 71:4. [b]23:25.[c]26:112.

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disheartened. It is the function of a divine reformer to tell people that he has with him the remedy of their corruption. Thus when Noah said that he was نذیر مبین i.e. a plain Warner, he meant that all his work was above suspicion and that his warning was based on reason; that he had come not to dishearten his people, but to make them realize their true condition. He also meant that he not only warned them of impending punishment but also pointed out to them the way in which they could escape that punishment. It was to "worship none but Allah."

1408. Commentary:

"A grievous punishment" is different from "the punishment of a grievous day." The latter expression implies greater intensity. Certain punishments are very grievous, but there are certain "days" the remembrance of which continues to cause great pain even after the lapse of hundreds of years. The actual "punishment" causes pain only to those on whom it falls, but remembrance of the "days" of a terrible punishment frightens even those who come after. Thus, by using the expression, *the punishment of a grievous day,* the Quran points to the fact that the threatened punishment was to be such as would be long remembered and would strike terror into the hearts of coming generations. This expression aptly describes the grievous nature of the punishment which overtook the people of Noah, for the great Deluge is remembered even to the present day as a terrible catastrophe the very thought of which inspires fear.

1409. Important Words:

بادی الرأی (to all outward appearance)

is made up of two Arabic words بادی and الرأی. The word بادی has two possible derivations. It may be derived from بدأ (*bad'a*) which means, he or it began or he or it came into existence. بدأ به means, he began with it; he made it to be the first. Or the word بادی may be derived from بدأ (of which the aorist is یبدو) which means, it appeared or it showed itself. According to these two different roots the word بادی would mean: (1) that which or he who is first or that which or he who begins; (2) that which or he who appears. And the word الرأی means sight or perception or opinion. So the compound expression بادی الرأی would mean: (1) at first thought or on the first opinion; (2) at the appearance of opinion or according to the appearance of opinion, which may mean either inconsiderately or insincerely (Lane, under بدا & بدأ).

Commentary:

The Arabic expression بادی الرأی (to all outward appearance) is capable of three interpretations according to the rules of Arabic grammar. First, it may be taken as referring to the words ونراك (and we see). In this case, the verse would mean that the followers of Noah appear to us to be the meanest of us at first thought or on the first opinion, i.e. so far as our opinion is concerned we consider them to be mean. If, however, there is any hidden good in them, it may be known to Noah only.

Secondly, the expression بادی الرأی may be taken to refer to the words اراذلنا (the meanest of us). In this case the verse would mean that the followers of Noah were apparently low and mean.

Thirdly, the expression بادی الرأی may be taken as qualifying the words اتبعك (have followed thee). In this case the verse would mean that those who have accepted Noah have done so only outwardly or without proper thinking i.e. their faith was either insincere or inconsiderate, being based on mere cursory thinking.

To sum up, the words اراذلنا بادی الرأی mean: (1) the followers of Noah are mean to all outward appearance; or (2) their faith in Noah is insincere; or (3) their faith is the result of only superficial thinking.

The words, *We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves,* mean, "There is nothing extraordinary in your outward appearance to distinguish you from us. You are just a human being like any other mortal. When therefore, there is nothing extraordinary in your outward appearance, how should we know that inwardly you have been endowed with exceptional powers which have helped you to gain access to Divine presence, while we cannot ?"

This is the common objection raised by the opponents of the Prophets. The enemies of Noah purported to say that if he possessed some special inward power from God, that ought to have caused some difference in his outward appearance and as a result of it he should have acquired knowledge of some worldly sciences also, but they saw no evidence of this. How could they then believe that his internal powers were different from, and superior to, theirs. In support of this argument the

29. [a]He said, "O my people, tell me if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord and He has bestowed upon me from Himself a great mercy which has been rendered obscure to you, shall we force it upon you, while you are averse thereto?[1410]

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ
مِّنْ رَّبِّىْ وَاٰتٰنِىْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ
فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ اَنُلْزِمُكُمُوْهَا
وَاَنْتُمْ لَهَا كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

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[a] 11:64; 47:15.

opponents of Noah might possibly have shown to him pictures of their holy men having extraordinary exteriors, such as the Hindu saints are believed to possess, for instance, a number of heads and several hands. In olden days, men could not conceive that a Prophet was like ordinary mortals in appearance. So the enemies of Noah, arguing that the outward must correspond with the inward and that there must be harmony between the two, raised against him the objection that if he was really a true Prophet, his outward appearance must have been different from theirs. Silly though the argument is, it must have won endorsement from the contemporaries of Noah.

The enemies of Noah further reinforce their argument by saying that while he himself possessed no special powers, and was a mortal like themselves, his followers were even worse than him. What success could he achieve, they asked, with adherents who, to all outward appearance, were the meanest of the society? The enemies of Noah thus argued that neither his own personal qualities nor those of his followers gave him the appearance of "superiority" over them.

The words, *we believe you to be liars*, embody the result of the arguments brought forward by Noah's opponents, which is that he was a liar, for he had asserted his truth and superiority without any basis or proof.

It is a pity that men test the claims of a heavenly Messenger by their self-devised standards and, when he does not satisfy those standards, they deceive themselves with the idea that they had weighed up his claims dispassionately and with an open mind and had found them to be false. Even in the present age when man has made great progress in knowledge, science and culture and has known many Prophets, he presumes to test the claims of God's Messengers' not by criteria laid down by Him but by his own false standards,

1410. Important Words:

انلزمکموها (shall we force it upon you) is derived from الزم which is derived from لزم. They say لزم الشیء i.e. he kept close or held fast to the thing. لزم الامر means, the order became binding. الزمه

30. [a]And O my people, I ask not of you any wealth in return for it. My reward is due from Allah alone. And [b]I am not going to drive away those who believe. They shall certainly meet their Lord. But I consider you to be a people who act ignorantly.[1411]

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا ؕ اِنْ
اَجْرِیَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا بِطَارِدِ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ
وَلٰكِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ ۝٣٠

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[a]10:73; 26:110.[b]26:115.

الشیء means, he made him cleave to the thing. الزمه العمل means, he obliged or compelled him to do the deed (Lane).

Commentary:

The words, *which has been rendered obscure to you*, mean that "the clear proof" and the "great mercy" have come to me in such a form that you cannot see them unless you ponder over them in the right spirit and on the right lines.

It is clear from this verse that in order to understand truth, one should think over it on right lines. Disbelievers cannot understand the truth because they reject it at the outset, without giving it the least consideration. In such circumstances, there can be no possibility of the truth being accepted except under compulsion. But compulsion, as the last portion of the verse makes clear, cannot be resorted to.

1411. Commentary:

After referring to the prejudiced attitude of his opponents, Noah now proceeds to defend himself and his followers. In the first place, he asks what purpose he could possibly have in fabricating lies. Was it self-interest or personal aggrandizement that he was seeking? They knew that he asked for no reward from them. Then why should he have resorted to the abominable practice of forging lies? It might be argued that though Noah asked for no reward, he at least commanded the allegiance of his followers and that in itself constituted sufficient motive for his activities. But this objection, too, stands on no solid ground, because the Prophets of God are always the first to act upon the commandments which they enjoin upon others and they subject themselves to a greater discipline than they demand from their followers. They do not exult in the authority they enjoy. Theirs is only a life of sacrifice and service and not of dictatorial authority over others.

After having defended himself, Noah goes on to defend his followers. He repudiates the strictures of his opponents against them by saying that, as they had professed to believe in him, he had no right to drive them away merely on the basis of groundless mistrust and suspicion. Again, as he asked for no reward or recompense from anybody, the

31. And O my people, who would help me against Allah, if I were to drive them away? Will you not then consider?[1412]

وَيٰقَوۡمِ مَنۡ يَّنۡصُرُنِيۡ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِنۡ طَرَدۡتُّهُمۡ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿٣١﴾

32. And [a]I say not to you, 'I possess the treasures of Allah,' nor do I know the unseen, nor

وَلَاۤ اَقُوۡلُ لَـكُمۡ عِنۡدِىۡ خَزَآٮِٕنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَاۤ اَعۡلَمُ الۡغَيۡبَ وَلَاۤ اَقُوۡلُ اِنِّىۡ مَلَكٌ وَّلَاۤ

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[a] 6:51.

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distinction of rich and poor did not exist for him and therefore he could not reject or spurn his followers on account of their being of humble origin. Only true and sincere faith carried weight with him, and that his followers possessed in abundance. Therefore, the objection that those who believed in him were poor and lowly was, besides being absurd, quite irrelevant.

Another objection which Noah's opponents levelled at his followers was that their faith was insincere. Noah rebutted this charge by saying that just as he did not demand any material benefit from them, they also did not demand anything from him. They only sought the favour of God Whom they were sure to meet, and He to Whom nothing is hidden would deal with them according to their faith. So, why should he question or doubt their sincerity?

The words, *They shall certainly meet their Lord*, also contain an answer to the taunt of disbelievers that Noah's followers had acquired no superiority over them by believing in him. Noah asked what greater superiority there could be than that his followers had attained nearness to God and had made great moral and spiritual progress, so much so that heavenly light shone in their faces. If in their ignorance his enemies could not see so patent a fact, the fault was their own.

The clause, *But I consider you to be a people who act ignorantly,* may refer to the sacrifices which the followers of Noah made in the cause of truth, for to believe in a Prophet in the beginning is not an easy matter. It is like plunging into fire. So Noah drew the attention of his opponents to the sacrifices of his followers and pointed out how unreasonable it was to hold their faith to be insincere in view of their great sacrifices for the sake of their faith.

1412. Commentary:

Noah says that his opponents wanted him to drive away his followers on account of their humble origin. But he could not displease God in order to win his opponents' pleasure by repelling away those who had believed in him for His sake. God was his help and support and without Him he could not acquit himself of the great task with which He had entrusted him. He therefore dared not incur God's displeasure by driving say I, ‘I am an angel.’ Nor say I concerning those whom your eyes despise, ‘Allah will not bestow any good upon them’—Allah knows best whatever is in their minds—Surely, I should then be of the unjust.”[1413]

اَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَزْدَرِيْٓ اَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚۖ اِنِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٣٢

33. They said, ‘O Noah, [a]thou hast indeed disputed with us *long* and hast disputed with us many a time; bring us now what thou threatenest us with, if thou art of those who speak the truth.’[1414]

قَالُوْا يٰنُوْحُ قَدْ جٰدَلْتَنَا فَاَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝٣٣

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[a] 46:23.

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away his followers.

1413. Commentary:

In the first part of this verse Noah answers the objections of his opponents about himself in another form. He says that they taunt him for being a mere human being like themselves. But his claim is not inconsistent with his being a human being. He is only a Prophet, and it was not necessary for a Prophet to be different in kind from those to whom he was sent. On the contrary, it is necessary that he should be one of them and similar to them. If he had ascribed divinity to himself and had said that God had delegated His authority to him, then indeed they could have asked how a human being like them could discharge Divine functions. But he has made no such claim. His only claim is that God had chosen him as an instrument for conveying to men the knowledge which He wishes to disclose to them.

The words, *Allah will not bestow any good upon them*, contain a further answer to the objections of Noah’s enemies about his followers. Noah says that they taunted his followers with being mean and lowly, but who could say what was going to happen in future or how God intended to bestow on these very poor people the blessings of Heaven and the earth. He further reinforces his argument by saying that truly mean is that person whose heart is corrupt, but the condition of the heart or the mind is known to God alone. They judged his followers by their outward condition while God, Who knew the real condition of their hearts, knew that they were not mean but the noblest of men. This is the significance of the words, *Allah knows best whatever is in their minds.*

1414. Commentary:

As in the previous verses Noah had

34. He said, [a]'Allah alone will bring it to you, if He please, and you cannot frustrate *God's purpose*.1415

قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ اِنْ شَآءَ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ۝٣٤

35. And my advice will profit you not if I desire to advise you, if Allah desires to destroy you. He is your Lord and to Him shall you be made to return.'1416

وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِيْٓ اِنْ اَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّغْوِيَكُمْ ؕ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ ۟ وَ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ۝٣٥ ؕ

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[a] 46:23-24.

hinted at the future prosperity of his followers and it was evident that they could prosper only if their opponents perished and thus cleared the way for their prosperity, therefore Noah's enemies realized that the prophecy of the future prosperity of believers implied a prophecy about their own destruction. So they asked him to give up all other discussions and let them know when their threatened destruction would come to pass.

1415. Commentary:

This verse embodies three important rules about prophecies foretelling the punishment of the enemies of God's Messengers: (1) that the time of their actual happening is generally not disclosed, being known only to God; (2) that they are conditional and can be deferred or revoked as God may desire; and (3) that whatever changes may take place in regard to prophecies of punishment, God's immutable purpose never changes, for disbelievers "cannot frustrate God's purpose."

1416. Important Words:

يغويكم (destroy you). See 7:17.

Commentary:

By the words, *If Allah desires to destroy you,* Noah means to say that though he ardently wishes his people to accept his Message and thus be saved, his love for them cannot exceed God's love for His creatures; and when God has decreed their destruction, the doom must be accepted as not only inevitable but also justified, and he must submit to His decree.

The verse also explodes the wrong notion commonly held that Noah prayed for the destruction of his people (71:27, 28), for it shows that it was not Noah who had prayed for their destruction but that God Himself had commanded him to do so.

The words, *He is your Lord,* are intended to hint that God destroys a people only when He finds that their destruction is necessary and is good for others; otherwise, being their

36. [a]Do they say, 'He has forged it?' Say, 'If I have forged it, on me be my sin and I am clear of the sins you commit.'[1417]

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرٰىهُ ۖ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِيْ وَأَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُجْرِمُوْنَ ۝٣٦

R. 4.

37. And it was revealed to Noah, 'None of thy people will believe except those who have already believed; grieve not therefore at what they have been doing.[1418]

وَأُوْحِيَ إِلٰى نُوْحٍ أَنَّهٗ لَنْ يُّؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ اٰمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٣٧

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[a] 46:9.

Lord and Master, He cannot wish them evil.

1417. Commentary:

The words, *Say, If I have forged it, on me be my sin,* refer to Noah and not to the Holy Prophet, and mean that God commanded Noah to tell his people that if in what he had said to them he had forged a lie against God, he would certainly be punished for it, so they need not worry about it. But if he was speaking the truth and was a true Messenger of God, then they had committed a great sin by rejecting him and would surely be called to account.

By saying, *I am clear of the sins you commit,* Noah clears himself of the charge of imposture in another way also. He points to his previous spotless life as proof of his truthfulness, for if he was free from the various sins in which his people were involved, he could not be expected to be so depraved as to forge lies against God, which was the most heinous of all sins.

1418. Important Words:

فلاتبتئس (grieve not therefore). تبتئس is derived from بئس meaning, he was or became in a state of distress, etc. ابتاس منه or ابتاس به means, he was distressed at it; or he grieved at it (Lane). See also 2:178.

Commentary:

This verse throws some light on Noah's prayer referred to in 71:27, 28. In the verse under comment Noah is told that he would have no more converts from his people but that he should not grieve on that account. This shows that up to the time when this revelation was sent to Noah, he had not despaired of his people and was always worrying over their disbelief. So the prayer referred to in 71:27, 28 must have been offered not prior to, but after, this revelation. In this revelation he was informed of God's decision that no more persons

38. And [a]build thou the Ark under Our eyes and *as commanded by* Our revelation. And address not Me concerning the wrongdoers. They are surely going to be drowned.’**1419**

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِيْ فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ۝٣٨

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[a] 23:28.

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from among his people would believe in him. All those who deserved to be rightly guided and who sincerely sought after Divine guidance had already been converted. Hence the prayer of Noah was no more than a submission to God’s decree. For, when God Himself had decided to destroy his wicked people, it was meaningless on Noah’s part to pray for their destruction. So all that Noah’s prayer meant was that God might carry out His decree about the destruction of his people, for he was now reconciled to it.

It often happens that a Prophet even after he has come to know of God’s decision to destroy a people, continues to pray for them, hoping that God may alter His decree and the people may yet believe and be saved. Noah also continued to pray for his people until he saw that further postponement of the punishment was prejudicial to the best interests of Faith. He then prayed that God might carry out His decree against his people.

Even if it be admitted that Noah did not merely ask God to carry out His decree but actually prayed for the destruction of his people, such a prayer cannot be held to be inconsistent with the dignity of a Prophet, for a prayer offered under Divine command can in no case be said to be derogatory to his dignity. When the All-Knowing God Himself discloses to a Prophet the perversity of his people and their inevitable doom, then a prayer on his part that such people should remain deprived of Divine guidance is no more than a simple statement of an existing fact.

1419. Important Words:

باعيننا (under Our eyes). اعين is the plural of عين which has a large variety of meanings. Among other things it means: (1) the eye; (2) look or view, as the Quran says ولتصنع على عيني, i.e. that thou mightest be reared in my view; (3) the people or inmates of a house or dwelling, as they say مابها عين i.e. there is no one in it (the house); (4) brothers from the same father and mother; (5) one’s protection and honour, as the Arabs say انت على عيني i.e. thou art entitled to be honoured and protected by me (Lane).

Commentary:

In view of one of the meanings of the word عين the expression باعيننا may mean "with the help of the people of Our house." The people of Noah’s house have been spoken of as "the

39. And he was making the Ark; and every time the chiefs of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, 'If *now* you mock at us, *the time is coming when* we shall mock at you even just as you mock *now*.[1420]

وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ ۗ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأٌ
مِّنْ قَوْمِهٖ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُ ؕ قَالَ اِنْ
تَسْخَرُوْا مِنَّا فَاِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا
تَسْخَرُوْنَ ؕ۳۹

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people of Our house," because those who are near and dear to a Prophet are also dear to God. Noah was bidden to build an ark with the aid of the people of God's spiritual house (for spiritually the followers of a Prophet belong to God's own house).

Taking the word عين in the sense of one's "protection" or "honour," the sentence would mean, "Make thou the Ark under Our protection," meaning that Noah's adversaries would jeer and mock at the building of the Ark, but he should pay no heed to their mockery, for he would be protected and honoured by God.

The verse may also allude to two kinds of arks, the physical ark which was to be built by Noah with the help of his followers, and the spiritual ark i.e. the ark of righteousness which God had bestowed on Noah's followers through him. Truly speaking, it is only the spiritual ark that can help to save a person from the punishment of God.

The words, *address not Me concerning the wrongdoers,* also show that Noah's prayer for the destruction of his people mentioned in 71:27, 28 was not offered by him at his own initiative, for when he himself was praying for the destruction of the wrongdoers, there was no occasion for God to order him not to pray for their deliverance.

1420. Commentary:

Messengers of God are always mocked at because they bring teachings which the people of their time are not prepared to accept. But these people never pause to consider that if heavenly Messengers were not entrusted with extraordinary work, there would be no need for God to send Messengers. It is only because man, in spite of his intellectual attainments, cannot rid himself of his manifold troubles and because the cure which, with the help of his experience and knowledge, he devises brings him no relief that God sends His Messengers for his guidance and deliverance, and as the remedy which they suggest is out of the ordinary, it naturally appears strange to him and he begins to ridicule and mock at it. But despite this jeering and ridicule, Divine Messengers and their followers succeed in attaining their goal, while their opponents make fools of themselves and incur God's displeasure.

فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ
يُّخْزِيْهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

40. [a]Then you shall know who it is on whom will come a punishment that will disgrace him, and on whom will fall a lasting punishment.'**1421**

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ قُلْنَا
احْمِلْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ
وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ
اٰمَنَ ؕ وَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ مَعَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿٤١﴾

41. Till, [b]when Our command came and the fountains *of the earth* gushed forth, We said, [c]'Embark therein two of every kind, male and female, and thy family, except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe.' And there did not believe *and live* with him except a few.**1422**

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[a]11:94; 39:40-41. [b]23:28; 54:13. [c]23:28.

For the meaning of the expression, *we shall mock at you,* see note on 2:16.

1421. Commentary:

Punishments are of various kinds. There are some misfortunes which excite pity for their victims, while others, besides causing pain, bring their victims into disgrace and also serve as a warning to others. Such was the punishment which overtook the people of Noah, for it constituted a disgrace and an humiliation which is remembered to this day.

The words, *a lasting punishment*, signify a punishment which will not end with the present life but will continue in the life to come.

Scoffers are here told by Noah that their scoffing can do him no harm nor can it bring him into disgrace. Therefore he does not feel humiliated on account of their mockery, but it is they who have a real cause to feel humiliated, for they are about to be overtaken by a punishment which will not end in this life but will continue in the life to come and will be attended by a lasting disgrace.

1422. Important Words:

فار (gushed forth). They say فارت القدر the kettle boiled or estuated. فارت نفسه means, his stomach heaved; or he became agitated by a tendency to vomit. فار الماء means, the water gushed forth and flowed. فار العرق means, the vein became excited and flowed forth with blood (Lane & Aqrab).

تنور (fountains of the earth) is derived from the root تنر and means, a

42. And he said, ‘Embark therein. In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. My Lord is assuredly Most Forgiving, Merciful.’

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوْا فِيْهَا بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖىهَا
وَمُرْسٰىهَا ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۴۲﴾

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sort of fire-place or oven in which bread is baked; the surface of the ground; the highest part of the earth; any place from which water pours forth, i.e. a fountain etc.; a place where the water of a valley collects; the shining of the dawn (Lane).

Commentary:

It should be remembered that the punishment which overtook the people of Noah was not merely due to the gushing forth of the water from a spring. But, as is clear from other passages of the Quran, the real source of the Deluge were the clouds. Rain fell in such abundance that there was water everywhere and as sometimes happens during heavy rain, water also began to gush forth from the depths of the earth, and springs and fountains began to sprout, and thus water, both from the heavens and the earth, flooded the whole land. In 54:12, 13, we read, *Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down; and We caused the earth to gush forth with springs; so the waters met for the purpose that had been decreed.* Similarly v. 45 below also speaks of water from both the heavens and the earth. In fact, it appears from the Quran that Noah lived in a mountainous country where springs were found in abundance, for in v. 44 Noah’s son is represented as saying, I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water, which shows that Noah lived at the foot of a mountain. Obviously when floods were rising fast on all sides, his son could not think of going to a far off mountain and taking shelter there.

The word كل (all) does not here mean all the animals of the earth. It only means all such animals as Noah needed. It has been similarly used in a restricted sense in other verses of the Quran as well. For instance, in 27:24, which speaks of the Queen of Sheba, we read, "She has been given everything." But all commentators are agreed in holding that by "everything" is here meant all that the Queen of Sheba needed and not everything in the literal sense of the word. If she had possessed "everything" in the literal sense of the word, she would have had in her possession everything existing in the world and Solomon dared not have said to her ambassador, *Go back to them, for we shall surely come to them with hosts, against which they will have no power, and we shall drive them out from there in disgrace, and they will feel abased* (27:38). Moreover, the Ark certainly was not big enough to carry a pair of all kinds of animals found in the world. The addition of the word "two" also shows that it was

43. And it moved along with them on waves like mountains. And Noah cried unto his son, while he was *keeping* apart, 'O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers.'[1423]

وَهِيَ تَجْرِيْ بِهِمْ فِيْ مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ قف
وَنَادٰى نُوْحُ ٰنِ ابْنَهٗ وَكَانَ فِيْ مَعْزِلٍ يّٰبُنَيَّ
ارْكَبْ مَّعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَّعَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾

44. He replied, 'I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water.' He said, 'There is no shelter *for anyone* this day, from the decree of Allah, excepting those to whom He shows mercy.' And the wave came in between the two; so he was among the drowned.[1424]

قَالَ سَاٰوِيْۤ اِلٰى جَبَلٍ يَّعْصِمُنِيْ مِنَ
الْمَآءِ ط قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ
اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ ج وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ
فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِيْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾

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meant that as few animals were to be taken as were absolutely necessary.

The words, *except those against whom the word has already gone forth,* do not mean "except those of whom thou hast been informed," but "except those against whom God's judgement has already been passed."

1423. Commentary:

Commentators differ as to whether the person referred to in this verse as Noah's son was his real son or only a near relative. According to some, he was his stepson. Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, Ibn Jubair and many other commentators, however, are inclined to view that he was Noah's own son. But discussion of this subject seems to be superfluous and unnecessary.

Christian annotators have questioned the authenticity of this incident on the ground that it does not agree with the Biblical account. But the authenticity of the Bible itself as a historical record is open to doubt and it is unreasonable to accept or reject an incident on its authority alone.

1424. Important Words:

ساوی (I shall betake myself). آوی is derived from اوی. They say اوی الیه i.e. he betook himself to or repaired or resorted to it; he betook himself to it or repaired to it for lodging, covert or refuge. اوی الی البیت means, he took up his abode in the house; he lodged or dwelt in it. The Quranic expression, اذ اوی الفتیة الی الکهف means, when the young men betook themselves to the cave for refuge. ماوی means, a place to which one repairs for lodging, covert or refuge (Lane).

45. And it was said, ‘O earth, swallow thy water, and O sky, cease *raining*.’ And the water was made to subside and the matter was ended. And *the Ark* came to rest on al-Jūdī. And it was said, ‘Cursed be the wrongdoing people.’[1425]

وَقِيۡلَ يٰۤاَرۡضُ ابۡلَعِيۡ مَآءَكِ وَيٰسَمَآءُ
اَقۡلِعِيۡ وَغِيۡضَ الۡمَآءُ وَقُضِيَ الۡاَمۡرُ
وَاسۡتَوَتۡ عَلَى الۡجُوۡدِيِّ وَقِيۡلَ بُعۡدًا
لِّلۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Commentary:

The verse shows that the place where Noah lived was surrounded by mountains. This is why his son said that he would take shelter in a mountain. The word جبل (a mountain) used as a common noun points to the fact that there was a chain of mountains on one of which Noah’s son wished to take shelter. In fact, the place appears to have been a valley with mountains rising on all sides. That such a place should become quickly flooded with heavy rain is not extraordinary.

The words, *which will shelter me from the water*, show how bigoted men shut their eyes to stark realities to the last. The flood is rising, but Noah’s son still entertains doubt about the truth of his father’s Message.

The expression, *And the wave came in between the two,* is intended to hint that God spared Noah the pain of seeing his son being drowned before his eyes. He was drowned behind the screen of a high wave.

1425. Important Words:

اقلعی (cease raining) is derived from قلع i.e. he displaced or uprooted. اقلع means, it (rain) left off; it cleared away. یاسماء اقلعی means, O sky, cease raining. اقلع عنه means, he or it left him; he abstained or desisted from it. They say أقلعت الحمى عن فلان i.e. the fever passed away or left such a one (Lane & Aqrab).

بعدا (curse) is the noun-infinitive from بعد which means, he or it was or became distant, remote, or aloof; he went or withdrew himself to a distance; he alienated; it perished. They say لا تعبد و ان بعدت عنی i.e. mayest thou not perish, though thou be distant from me. The Arabs say ابعده الله i.e. may God alienate him, or estrange him from good or prosperity; or may God curse him. بعد means, distance or remoteness; remoteness from probability or correctness i.e. improbability or strangeness; perdition or death; judgement and prudence; curse, execration or malediction. They say, بعدا له i.e. may he be cursed, or may God alienate him from good (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that water not only came out from the "fountains of the earth" (v. 41) but it also fell from the sky (i.e. the clouds) and thus both combined to deluge the land.

46. And Noah cried unto his Lord and said, ‘My Lord, verily, my son is of my family, and surely, Thy promise is true, and

وَنَادٰى نُوْحٌ رَّبَّهٗ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ ابْنِيْ
مِنْ اَهْلِيْ وَاِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنْتَ

The mountain al-Jūdī is, according to Yāqūt al-Ḥamwī, a long chain of mountains on the eastern side of the Tigris in the province of Moṣul (Mu‘jam). According to Sale, "al-Jūdī is one of those mountains which divide Armenia on the south from Mesopotamia and that part of Assyria which is inhabited by the Curds, from whom the mountain took the name of Cardu or Gardu, but the Greeks turned it into Gordyaei...The tradition which affirms the ark to have rested on these mountains must have been very ancient, since it is the tradition of the Chaldeans themselves (Berosus, apud *Joseph. Antiq.*). To confirm it, we are told that the remainders of the ark were to be seen on the Gordyaean mountains. Berosus and Abydenus both declare that there was such a report in their time…The relics of the ark were also to be seen here in the time of Epiphanius and we are told the Emperor Heraclius went from the town of Thamanin up to the mountain al-Jūdī and saw the place of the ark. There was also formerly a famous monastery, called the monastery of the ark, upon some of these mountains where the Nestorians used to celebrate a feast-day on the spot where they supposed the ark rested; but in 776 A.D. that monastery was destroyed by lightning" (Sale, pp. 179, 180).

Again, "Judi (Djūdī) is a lofty mountain mass in the district of Bohtān, about 25 miles N.E. of Jazīrat ibn ‘Omar in 37°, 30′ N. Lat…It owes its fame to the Mesopotamian tradition, which identifies it, and not Mount Ararat, with the mountain on which Noah’s ark rested. It is practically certain from a large number of Armenian and other writers that, down to the 10th century, Mt. Ararat was in no way connected with the Deluge. Ancient Armenian tradition certainly knows nothing of a mountain on which the ark rested; and when one is mentioned in later Armenian literature, this is clearly due to the gradually increasing influence of the Bible which makes the ark rest on the mountains (or a mountain) of Ararat. The highest and best known mountain there is Masik…The tradition that Masik was the mountain on which the Ark rested, only begins to find a place in Armenian literature in the 11th and 12th centuries. Older exegesis identified the mountain now called Judi, or according to Christian authorities the mountains of Gordyene, as the *apobaterion* of Noah (Enc. of Islam. Vol. 1, p. 1059).

Babylonian traditions also place the mount al-Jūdī in Armenia (Jew. Enc. under Ararat) and the Bible admits that Babylon was the place where the descendants of Noah lived (Gen. 11:9).

Thou art the Most Just of judges.'[1426]

اَحْكَمُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ۝٤٦

47. He said: 'O Noah, he is surely not of thy family; he is indeed *a man of* unrighteous conduct. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I advise thee lest thou become *one* of the ignorant.'[1427]

قَالَ يٰنُوْحُ اِنَّهٗ لَيْسَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ
عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ ۖۗ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ
لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ اِنِّيْٓ اَعِظُكَ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ
مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ۝٤٧

1426. Commentary:

This verse beautifully illustrates how the Prophets maintain a highly respectful attitude to God even under very hard trials. Noah had, by an error of judgement, thought that all the members of his family would be saved from the flood, but when he saw that his son was going to be drowned, he made his supplication to God in a most respectful way, appealing to Him in the name of His promise about the safety of his family. He was, however, careful to add that if his son was drowned, he would not think that God's promise was false but that he himself had misunderstood the Divine Words, for God's promise was ever true and His judgement always just.

1427. Important Words:

عمل (man of conduct) generally signifies work, deed or action; a motion of the whole or of a portion of the body or even of the mind; the utterance of a saying. The word عمل (lit. deed) may also mean ذوعمل i.e. the doer of a deed, which construction is permissible in the Arabic language when an intensified sense is intended (Lane & Muḥīṭ).

Commentary:

In a brief sentence, viz. *he is surely not of thy family,* God disclosed a great truth to Noah.

What He meant was that when He promised to save his family, He did not mean all members of the family, but only such of them as were righteous and believed in him, because, truly speaking, only those persons were members of his family who had established a true relationship with God through him.

The Quranic words انه عمل غير صالح rendered here as, *he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct,* are capable of two interpretations. First, they may refer to the prayer of Noah. In that case, the clause would mean that this act of his, i.e. his prayer for his son, was غير صالح i.e. out of place, the word صالح meaning "suitable, meet or proper." By using these words with regard to Noah's prayer, God meant to point out that as He had already pronounced His judgement and the hour of punishment had actually arrived, so the time for prayer had passed.

Secondly, the clause may refer to Noah's son. In that case, the word عمل (lit. deed) would be taken as meaning ذوعمل (the doer of a deed). This usage of the word is quite in harmony with Arabic idiom, according to which the infinitive is sometimes used in place of the active participle to impart emphasis. An Arab poet describing the restlessness of a she-camel who had lost her young ones says: انما هي اقبال و ادبار i.e. "She is so restless that she has become the very act of moving forward and backward," meaning the embodiment thereof. According to this meaning of the word عمل the clause would mean that the reason why his son was not considered as belonging to his family was that he was a man of unrighteous conduct.

The words, *ask not of Me,* may mean either asking for a favour in prayer or simply inquiring. Taking the words in the former sense, the verse would mean that one should not pray for a matter of whose benefit one is not certain, for in such a case a man cannot know whether what he is praying for will prove a blessing or a curse. In such cases one should pray to God only generally to grant what is good in His sight. There are, however, certain matters about the goodness of which there can be no doubt, e.g. the pleasure of God or the welfare of the life to come. For such matters one can pray without qualification. The prayer of Noah for his son belonged to the former category. He did not know how his son would behave if he were saved. It was possible, nay it was most probable, that if he had been saved, the cause of religion would have materially suffered through him.

If the word "ask" be taken in the sense of "inquire," the verse would mean that Noah was not to inquire about a matter which was beyond his power to comprehend or the disclosure of which was not considered proper. The words ماليس لك به علم do not, in this case, mean "that of which thou hast no knowledge," for man always inquires about matters which he does not know. The words would therefore mean "that which thou canst not know," either because they are beyond thy comprehension or because they cannot be disclosed to thee.

God's reply to Noah given in the words, *he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct,* shows that Noah was not aware of the misdeeds of his son, and the reason why Noah was advised to abstain from asking questions about his son was that such questions were calculated to expose the latter's misdeeds, which was inconsistent with the God's attribute of mercy as well as with His attribute of covering up or screening the faults of His creatures. Extraordinary are the ways of God! On the one hand He decreed that Noah's son should be drowned, and on the other His mercy drew a veil over his misdeeds.

The clause, *I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant,* refers to Noah's prayer to God to save his son, who was a member of his family and was apparently included among those whom God had promised to save, and

48. He said, 'My Lord, I beg Thee to protect me from asking Thee that whereof I have no knowledge. And [a]unless Thou forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be among the losers.'[1428]

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡۤ اَعُوۡذُ بِکَ اَنۡ اَسۡـَٔلَکَ مَا
لَیۡسَ لِیۡ بِہٖ عِلۡمٌ ؕ وَ اِلَّا تَغۡفِرۡ لِیۡ
وَ تَرۡحَمۡنِیۡۤ اَکُنۡ مِّنَ الۡخٰسِرِیۡنَ ﴿۴۸﴾

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[a] 7:24.

means: "You, being the bearer of the Word of God, must in future ponder over every aspect of the Divine revelation received by you and should not act unknowingly." In other words, the seeming indefiniteness of the prophecy was cited to serve the purpose of a warning to Noah, who was asked to learn a lesson from it and to remember that prophecies bear more than one meaning and that their true significance becomes known only when they are actually fulfilled.

It may be asked why, whereas Noah refers to a "promise" of God (see the preceding verse), actually there is no mention of a Divine promise here. In this connection it may be noted that the words ارکبوھا بسم اللہ i.e. *Embark therein in the name of Allah*...(v. 42) did imply a Divine promise, because sometimes a commandment is tantamount to an undertaking. When God directed Noah to make his people enter the Ark, the direction implied a promise by God to save those who entered it. Similarly, the words, *except those against whom the word has already gone forth* (v. 41), also point to a promise having been made by God. If the above-quoted words contained only a commandment and implied no promise, the names of excepted persons should have been revealed to Noah so that these could have been refused entrance. The fact that the names of the excepted persons were not disclosed shows that all those who went into the Ark were meant to be saved.

1428. Commentary:

This verse shows the exalted spiritual position to which the Prophets of God attain. When Noah heard the Divine remonstration, he not only withdrew his words, but solicited God's help against repeating such a mistake. In contrast to this, how pitiable is the condition of those who, though enjoying no spiritual status, yet boast and brag and make big claims and do not profit by the example of God's chosen servants.

The words, *unless Thou forgive me,* throw interesting light on the significance of the term استغفار (asking for forgiveness) when used about a Prophet of God. The verse mentions the استغفار of Noah. Now as the preceding verses clearly show Noah had committed no sin against the Law but only an error of judgement, which

49. It was said, ‘O Noah, descend *then* with peace from Us and blessings upon thee and upon peoples *to be born* of those with thee. And there will be *other* peoples whom We shall grant provision *for a time*, then shall a grievous punishment touch them from Us.’[1429]

قِيۡلَ يٰنُوۡحُ اهۡبِطۡ بِسَلٰمٍ مِّنَّا وَ بَرَكٰتٍ عَلَيۡكَ وَعَلٰۤى اُمَمٍ مِّمَّنۡ مَّعَكَ ؕ وَ اُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمۡ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمۡ مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۴۹﴾

50. This is of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to thee. Thou didst not know them, neither thou nor thy people, before this. So be thou patient;

تِلۡكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ ۚ مَا كُنۡتَ تَعۡلَمُهَاۤ اَنۡتَ وَلَا قَوۡمُكَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ هٰذَا ؕۛ فَاصۡبِرۡ ؕۛ اِنَّ الۡعَاقِبَةَ لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ ع

معانقة ۹ عند المتاخرين

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is human, yet in spite of this he is here reported to have offered استغفار. This proves that the offering of استغفار is not the proof of one’s sinfulness in all cases. It may be offered for protection against the consequences of human weaknesses or against errors of judgement.

1429. Commentary:

This verse shows that not only was the progeny of Noah saved from the Flood and was blessed by God and multiplied upon the earth, but the progeny of those believers who were with him in the Ark also prospered and multiplied. So the popular notion that only Noah’s progeny survived and multiplied in the earth has no basis in fact. This statement of the Quran establishes its superiority over the Bible. All educated Christians now believe that the inhabitants of the earth are not all descended from Noah; but in holding this view they, in fact, subscribe to the statement of the Quran and reject that of the Bible, for the Bible clearly says that only Noah and his sons survived the Deluge and that it was their progeny that dwelt and multiplied in the earth (Gen. ch. 9). Accordingly, Christian writers divide the human race into three groups, viz. the descendants of Ham, Sam and Yapheth, the three sons of Noah. But according to the Quran the children of those who believed in Noah also survived and multiplied in the earth, to say nothing of other races.

The clause, *there will be other peoples whom We shall grant provision,* may mean: (1) that even in the time of Noah there were other peoples who did not perish but who were given respite and then perished in due time; (2) that some of those who were saved with Noah and who received blessings became corrupt in due course and were then punished by God.

for the end is for the God-fearing.[1430]

1430. Commentary:

The words, *This is of the tidings of the unseen,* are intended to hint that the Quranic accounts of the various Prophets are not meant as mere stories of the ancient peoples. They are given in the Quran because they contain a prophetic allusion to the analogous events that were to occur in the life of the Holy Prophet himself. This is what is implied in the words "the tidings of the unseen". The concluding words of the verse, i.e. "the end is for the God-fearing," lend further support to this inference. These accounts also serve to warn Muslims that they too will have to pass through the experiences of the followers of former Prophets and they warn disbelievers that they too shall meet a fate similar to that of the rejecters of past Prophets.

The words, *So be thou patient,* mean that just as the people of Noah were destroyed, so will a section of the Holy Prophet’s people be destroyed; and then of their seed and of the seed of their companions God will raise a people who will bear the standard of piety and righteousness in every age.

The story of the Deluge with some variations is to be found in the traditions and literature of various countries (see Enc. Rel. & Eth. Enc. Bib. & Enc. Brit. under Deluge). The importance which is attached to it and the widespread credence it commands points to its being an historical event of very great importance. It cannot be denied that a great flood did take place sometime in the remote past, that it was of an extraordinary nature and that it affected many nations of the earth. Its description as given in the Quran, however, shows that there was nothing unnatural about it.

The catastrophe seems to have taken place somewhere at the dawn of human civilization. The Holy Prophet of Islam spoke of Noah as the first Messenger of God, i.e. the first organizer of a religious community (Bukhārī, ch. on *Anbiyā’*). The Bible also represents him as such (Gen. 6:8). Hindu traditions, too, corroborate this fact, for they speak of Manu (who is the same as Noah), the Hindu hero of the Deluge, as the first man (Enc. Brit. under Manu). But they add that seven others were saved with him, which points to the fact that he was not the first man absolutely but only the first man of the first cycle of human civilization. These statements made in the Scriptures of three great religions of the world leave no doubt about the fact that Noah laid the foundations of human civilization and culture. In fact, with the progress and advance of a people in civilization, their numbers also begin to grow with a corresponding decrease taking place in the numbers of less civilized communities living with them in the same land. It is a well-known historical fact that whenever a people, comparatively more advanced in

R. 5.

51. And [a]to ‘Ād *We sent* their brother Hūd. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allah *alone*. You have no God beside Him. You are but forgers of lies.**1431**

وَاِلٰی عَادٍ اَخَاهُمۡ هُوۡدًا ؕ قَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ
اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَیۡرُهٗ ؕ اِنۡ
اَنۡتُمۡ اِلَّا مُفۡتَرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۱﴾

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[a] 7:66.

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culture and civilization, have come to settle in a country, they have either blotted out of existence the less civilized inhabitants of the land or have greatly weakened them. Thus it appears that when the descendants of Noah and those of his companions, who were the founders of human civilization, spread to other lands, because they were more powerful than the people already living there, they either exterminated them or absorbed them by breaking their power. In this way they must have introduced into all the countries they subjugated their own traditions and customs; and consequently the tradition about the Deluge which naturally impressed the subjugated people must also have come to be introduced into other lands. With the lapse of time, however, the immigrants ceased to have any connection with their original home and the catastrophe consequently came to be regarded as a local occurrence, with the result that local names of persons and places came to be substituted for the original names.

In short, the Deluge was not a universal visitation, nor should the traditions of different lands be taken to point to separate floods. It was confined to one land, but owing to the immigration of the descendants of Noah and his companions to other lands, the story spread far and wide and finally the Flood came to be regarded as a local occurrence in every country.

As for the place where the Deluge occurred see note on al-Jūdī in v. 45.

1431. Commentary:

European critics have denied the very existence of the ‘Ādites. They say that none of the inscriptions that have so far been discovered in Arabia mention ‘Ād as the name of any people in that country, and therefore they allege that the Quran has only quoted one of the popular legends that were current among the Arabs in the Prophet’s time.

This objection is based on a misunderstanding. In fact, sections of the human race are generally known by two sets of names, one representing the whole race and the other some particular group thereof. "Aryan," for instance, is the collective name of a whole race which comprises many groups and tribes. Now it would be absurd to infer that because inscriptions have been found bearing, for example, only such names as Chandra Gupta or Vikramaditya and no inscription is discovered bearing the name "Aryan," therefore "Aryan" is only a fictitious name and no nation of that name ever existed.

In the same way ‘Ād was not the name of a single tribe but of a group of tribes, whose different sections rose to power at different times. They left behind them inscriptions bearing the name of particular groups. But they all belonged to the main ‘Ād family. The fact that this name is found in ancient books of geography also shows that a people of the name of ‘Ād did indeed live. The geographical works compiled in Greece state that in the pre-Christian era, Yemen was ruled by a tribe called Adramitai who were no other than the ‘Ād who have been called ‘Ādi Iram in the Quran. The termination of the Greek name is a noun-suffix, the real name being ‘Ādram which is a corruption of ‘Ādi Iram.

Some European writers think that Adramitai stands for Hadramaut but this is incorrect, because Hadramaut is the name of a place while Adramitai is the name of a tribe. Moreover, the name Hadramaut occurs both in Greek and Latin books, and nowhere has it been given as Adramitai. In Greek books it is given as Adramotitai, while in Latin books it is given as Chatramotitai. It is not reasonable to think that in this particular case geographers abandoned a generally accepted spelling and invented a new form. Moreover, the same work which mentions the tribe of Adramitai also gives an account of Hadramaut (Adramotitai) which clearly shows that according to the author of that book, Adramitai and Adramotitai are two different names (*Al-‘Arab qabl al-Islam*).

The Quran gives the following facts about the ‘Ādites:

(1) They built lofty buildings, and no other people in Arabia attained to that height of power to which they had attained (89:9). The verse referred to above also shows that the tribe of ‘Ād mentioned in the Quran was called Iram. This Iram section of the ‘Ādites possessed a powerful kingdom which lasted up to 500 B.C. Their language was Aramaic, which is akin to Hebrew. The Aramaic kingdom was established after the fall of the Semitic kingdom and it included in its boundaries the whole of Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and Chaldea and, according to certain authorities, it extended even beyond these limits. Archaeological researches have discovered traces of this kingdom,

2. The people of ‘Ād as mentioned in the Quran lived immediately after the people of Noah (7:70). This shows that the Semites and other peoples referred to in history as existing before the Aramites were also sections of the ‘Ādites.

3. They built monuments on elevated places (26:129). There still exist ruins of great buildings in Arabia. Only a few miles from Aden there can still be seen remains of lofty buildings erected on high hills,

4. It appears from 46:26 that the

52. O my people, [a]I do not ask of you any reward therefor. My reward is not due except from Him Who created me. Will you not then understand?[1432]

يٰقَوْمِ لَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا ؕ اِنْ اَجْرِیَ اِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِیْ فَطَرَنِیْ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾

53. And O my people, [b]ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him, He will send over you clouds pouring down abundant rain, and will add

وَيٰقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْۤا اِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا وَّ يَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً اِلٰى قُوَّتِكُمْ

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[a]26:128. [b]11:4, 62; 71:11.

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history of these people has now become wrapped in obscurity and only some remains of their buildings are to be seen.

5. The territory in which these people lived is called *Aḥqāf* (46:22). *Aḥqāf,* which literally means meandering and zigzag sandhills, is the name given to two parts of Arabia, one in the south, known as the Southern *Aḥqāf*, the other in the north, called the Northern *Aḥqāf* These tracts are fertile, but as they lie near the desert, sandhills are caused there by the sand of the desert having been heaped up by the wind. These sand-hills may not have existed in the time when these people lived there and may have come into being when ‘Ād were punished by a sandstorm.

6. From 69:7 it appears that the destruction of the ‘Ādites was caused by the blowing of a violent wind which continued to rage over their territory for seven days, burying their chief cities under heaps of sand and dust. This disaster broke the power of these peoples and brought about their fall. The words, *so that thou mightest have seen the people therein lying overthrown* (69:8), show that their habitations lie buried under mounds of sand and their ruins may still be brought to light if the ground is cleared of the sandhills. This verse also shows that the territory received the name *Aḥqāf* only when after the Divine visitation they became buried under sandhills.

1432. Commentary:

This verse reveals on the one hand an independence of spirit and an absence of any selfish motive on the part of the Prophet Hūd and, on the other, represents him as helplessly crying for God’s mercy. Such, indeed, is the true nature of all holy men. In their attitude towards the men of this world they display complete independence of spirit, but before God they exhibit such humility and lowliness as if they are virtually nothing.

strength to your strength. And turn not away sinners.'[1433]	وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ۝٥٣
54. They said, 'O Hūd, thou hast not brought us any clear proof, and [a]we are not going to forsake our gods *merely* because of thy saying, nor are we going to believe thee.[1434]	قَالُوْا يٰهُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِيْٓ اٰلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝٥٤

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[a] 71:24.

1433. Important Words:

مدرارا (pouring down abundant rain) is derived from در which means, it (the milk) was or became copious or abundant; or it flowed copiously or abundantly. They say درت الناقة بلبنها i.e. the she-camel yielded her milk, or made it to flow, copiously or abundantly. درت السماء بالمطر means, the sky poured down rain abundantly. سماء مدرار means, a sky pouring down abundance of rain. رزق دار means, continual and, uninterrupted sustenance (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse shows that the chief occupation of the people of 'Ād was agriculture and that they depended on rainwater for the cultivation of their land, there being no wells or canals to irrigate it. It also hints that the acceptance of a Prophet of God improves and betters not only the moral and spiritual condition of a people but also their material condition and leads to all-round progress and prosperity.

1434. Commentary:

It is strange that a people who themselves followed the most unreasonable practice of setting up equals to God and of associating partners with Him should have demanded from Hūd evidence in support of his monotheistic teachings. The onus of proof, in fact, lay on those who practised *shirk* and not on those who denied it. They themselves practised *shirk* for which they possessed no reasonable basis; yet when arguments were given in refutation of their creed they denied them as if they were great believers in arguments and never accepted anything without them.

The words, *merely because of thy saying*, are expressive of great contempt. The opponents of Hūd meant to say that they could not give up their deities for the sake of such a contemptible person as he. As a matter of fact, evil-minded persons are ever wont to put a wrong construction even on sincere motives. Hūd's opponents misunderstood his exhortations and thought that his real object was not to preach the truth but to gain mastery over them. So they replied by saying that they would not forsake their idols for his sake and were not going to obey him.

55. We can only say that some of our gods have visited thee with evil.' He replied, 'Surely, I call Allah to witness, and do ye also bear witness that I am clear of that which you associate as partners *with God.*[1435]	اِنْ نَّقُوْلُ اِلَّا اعْتَرٰىكَ بَعْضُ اٰلِهَتِنَا بِسُوْٓءٍ ؕ قَالَ اِنِّیْٓ اُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا اَنِّیْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۙ﴿۵۵﴾
56. Beside Him. [a]So devise plans against me, all *of you*, and give me no respite;[1436]	مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَكِیْدُوْنِیْ جَمِیْعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ﴿۵۶﴾
57. I have indeed put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. [b]There is no creature that moves *on the earth* but He holds it by the forelock. Surely, my Lord *stands* on the straight path.[1437]	اِنِّیْ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَی اللّٰهِ رَبِّیْ وَرَبِّكُمْ ؕ مَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ اٰخِذٌۢ بِنَاصِیَتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّیْ عَلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِیْمٍ ﴿۵۷﴾

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[a]7:196; 10:72. [b]11:7.

1435. Important Words:

اعتراك (have visited thee) is derived from the root عرو. They say عراه (as also اعتراه), i.e. he came to him; or he repaired to him, seeking his aid or bounty. عراه الامر means, the affair or event came upon him or befell him. اعتراه said of a malady or of a diabolical possession, etc. means, it befell or betided him; or it attacked him; or it was incidental to him. اعتراه also means, he or it rendered him possessed or insane or unsound in intellect or in some limb (Lane).

Commentary:

The words, *I am clear of that which you associate as partners with God,* constitute a strong reply to the allegation of disbelievers that their gods had caused Hūd's mind to become deranged. He says to them in reply that if they think that any of their gods has afflicted his mental powers, then let them know that he roundly condemned all their false gods and evil practices, and so let their deities do their worst against him.

The expression, *I call Allah to witness,* means, "You have refused to listen to reason. So now I pray to God that He may distinguish the truth from falsehood by mighty Signs from heaven."

1436. Commentary:

This verse should be read along with the preceding one, of which grammatically it forms a part. It has been separated from the former to impart emphasis to the words, *Beside Him.*

1437. Important Words:

بناصيتها (by its forelock). ناصية is

58. If, then, you turn away, [a]I have already conveyed to you that with which I have been sent to you, and [b]my Lord will make another people take your place. And you cannot harm Him at all. Surely, my Lord is Guardian over all things.’[1438]

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَّآ أُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖٓ
إِلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّيْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۚ
وَلَا تَضُرُّوْنَهٗ شَيْـًٔا ؕ إِنَّ رَبِّيْ عَلٰى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيْظٌ ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a]7:69; 46:24.[b]4:134; 6:134.

derived from نصا. They say نصا الرجل i.e. he caught hold of the man by his forelock. انتصى الشعر means, the hair grew long. ناصية means, the fore part of the head; the long hair over the fore part of the head; forelock. نواصى الناس means, the chiefs or nobles among men. The Arabs say ازل فلان ناصية فلان i.e. such a one has humbled and disgraced the other. The Quranic expression ما من دابة الاهو آخذ بناصيتها signifies that God holds all creatures in absolute power (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

By the words, *my Lord and your Lord*, Hūd means that when God, Who is your Lord and Master is also my Friend and Helper, then how can I fear you who are only His servants, for servants can do no harm to the friend of their master.

The words, *but He holds it by the forelock,* refer to an ancient custom of the Arabs. When vanquished people were brought as captives before their victor, he often caught hold of their forelock and shook it in token of victory. Another custom among them was that when the victor desired to show mercy to the vanquished, he sometimes shaved their forelocks and then set them free. So the clause may mean both these things. It may mean that every human being is in the power and under the control of God; or it may mean that as an act of grace God has created man free. Thus the Quran reminds him that he is completely in the power of God and that it is only through His bounty and favour that he is permitted a free life; otherwise by his sinful deeds he forfeits his title to it.

1438. Important Words:

حفيظ (Guardian) is derived from حفظ. They say حفظه i.e. he kept it, preserved it, guarded it or protected it; he prevented it from perishing or becoming lost. حفظ السر means, he kept the secret. حفظ يمينه means, he kept or fulfilled his oath. حفظ القرآن means, he committed the Quran to memory or he retained the Quran in his memory. حافظ or حفيظ means, a keeper, preserver, watcher or guardian of a thing; one who is careful, mindful, attentive or considerate. الحفيظ is one of the attributive names of God and means the Preserver of all things; He from Whose preservation nothing is excluded (Lane & Aqrab).

59. And when Our command came, We saved Hūd and those who believed with him, by Our *special* mercy. And [a]We saved them from a severe torment.1439

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُوْدًا وَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۵۹﴾

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[a] 7:73.

Commentary:

The opponents of God's Prophets, in their ignorance, often think that by rejecting the Message of a Prophet, they can do him any harm. But in no way can they harm a Divine Messenger. In fact, the rejection of a message can either harm the person who sends the message or the person to whom the message is sent. It cannot harm the bearer of the message. So the Prophet Hūd says that he is only a Message-bearer, and therefore he would come to harm only if he failed to deliver his Message, but as he has faithfully delivered the Message he need fear no harm. Again, the rejection of the Message by the people can do no harm to God, Who is the Sender of the Message, for He is All-Powerful. So the only people who can come to grief by the rejection of the Message are those who reject it. If the people to whom it is originally addressed do not accept it, some other people will accept it and it will make them prosper. The Divine Message can never go in vain.

By the words, *my Lord is Guardian over all things,* Prophet Hūd means to say that God will guard the teachings which He has sent through him. They also mean that the works of disbelievers are in the custody of God and they will have to render an account of them before Him.

1439. Important Words:

غليظ (severe) is derived from غلظ which means, it was or became thick, gross, bulky or coarse. غليظ means thick, gross, etc. It also means rough or rugged; dense or deep; rough manners or conduct; rude, unkind, hard, or ill-natured; vehement or severe; intensely painful (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, *by Our special mercy*, point to a law of God that when a general calamity overtakes a country, both good and bad people become involved in it. But, as in the time of a Prophet these calamities visit the earth in order to testify to his truth, God so ordains that believers more or less remain immune from them. This comparative immunity of believers from such visitations is due to the special grace and mercy of God, which become, as it were, particularly excited in the time of a heavenly Messenger.

The words عذاب غليظ (severe torment) are intended to hint that disbelievers will not get immunity from the calamities notwithstanding their efforts; for, like one who gets stuck in

60. And these were ‘Ād. They denied the Signs of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers and followed the bidding of every haughty enemy *of truth.*[1440]

وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ ۟ جَحَدُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهٗ وَاتَّبَعُوْۤا اَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ۝٦٠

61. [a]And a curse was made to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection. Behold! *the tribe of* ‘Ād behaved ungratefully to their Lord. Behold! cursed are ‘Ād, the people of Hūd![1441]

وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ عَادًا كَفَرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُوْدٍ ۝٦١ ع

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[a] 28:43.

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thick and deep mud, they will not be able to extricate themselves from it. See the different meanings of the word غليظ above.

1440. Commentary:

The word تلك (these) points to the worldly greatness and grandeur of the tribe of ‘Ād. It has been used to hint that although the ‘Ādites were a powerful people, yet when they behaved insolently and wickedly and rejected the Divine Messenger, they came to nought.

1441. Important Words:

اتبعوا (was made to follow) literally means, they were made to follow. تبعه means, he followed him. اتبعه means, he followed and overtook him. اتبعه also means, he made him follow another (Lane).

Commentary:

The word لعنة (curse) when ascribed to God means "removing to a distance" or "casting away from mercy." In this sense the first sentence of the verse would mean that God will remove or cast away disbelievers from His mercy and they will not attain His nearness nor see Him on the Day of Resurrection.

The words, *the tribe of ‘Ād behaved ungratefully to their Lord,* comprise an extremely touching sentence and indicate how perverse and ungrateful were the ‘Ād that they refused to listen to the voice of their رب (Lord), Who brought them into being and then nourished and sustained them. Nobility of character demanded that they should have been grateful to Him, but by rejecting His Message, they set the seal not only on their ingratitude but also on their folly, because they consigned to oblivion the patent fact that He Who gave them greatness and glory could also degrade and debase them.

R. 6.

62. [a]And to *the tribe of* Thamūd *We sent* their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said, ‘O my people worship Allah; you have no God but Him. He raised you up from the earth, and settled you therein. So ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him *whole-heartedly*. Verily, my Lord is nigh, *and* answers *prayers*.’**1442**

وَاِلٰی ثَمُوۡدَ اَخَاهُمۡ صٰلِحًا ۘ قَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ
اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَیۡرُهٗ ؕ هُوَ
اَنۡشَاَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَاسۡتَعۡمَرَكُمۡ
فِیۡهَا فَاسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡهُ ثُمَّ تُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَیۡهِ ؕ
اِنَّ رَبِّیۡ قَرِیۡبٌ مُّجِیۡبٌ ﴿۶۲﴾

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[a] 7:74.

1442. Important Words:

مجیب (answers prayers) which literally means answerer of prayers, is derived from جاب. They say جابه i.e. he made a hole through it; or he tore it or cut it; or he hollowed it out. جاب also means, he traversed or crossed or cut through (the land) by journeying. اجابه means, he answered or replied to him. اجاب دعاءه means, He (God) answered his prayer or accepted his prayer. مجیب means, one who answers or replies. المجیب is one of the names of God and means, the Answerer of prayers; He Who recompenses prayers by gift and acceptance (Lane). See also 2:187

Commentary:

Ṣāliḥ, the name of the Prophet sent to the tribe of Thamūd, being an Arabic word, shows that the Thamūd were an Arab people. It is futile to say that Ṣāliḥ may be the translation of a foreign name, for the Quran has adopted all foreign names without translating them. The names *Mūsā* (Moses), *Hārūn* (Aaron), *Yūnus* (Jonah) and *Zechariah* (Zachariah) may be cited as examples. The Quran further states that the Thamūd were successors to the ‘Ād (7:75) which means that the ‘Ād were also an Arab race. Again, the ‘Ād, in their turn, have been spoken of in the Quran as successors to the people of Noah. This shows that Noah was also raised in an Arab territory and belonged to the Arab race. In fact, even historically it has been proved that Noah was raised in Mesopotamia, the territory of which was in early times under Arab rule.

The above fact leads to an interesting inference that Arabic was the language used by man in the beginning of the world, for when Arabia is admitted to be the cradle of the human race, the language of that country will have to be admitted as the mother of all languages.

European scholars hold that in the beginning there was such a language as Samiri, from which sprang Arabic and which subsequently became changed and distorted into other tongues. It is also admitted that Samiri was spoken in the south of Arabia. But the truth is that the different languages spoken in Mesopotamia and Arabia are all offshoots of Arabic.

The clause, *He raised you up from the earth,* does not mean that the people of Ṣāliḥ were created from the earth. It only means: "You were a lowly and despised people, no better than the earth. Then God raised you to a high position, granted you prosperity and eminence, gave you power and dominion and entrusted to you the task of bettering and improving the condition of the world. In view of your immense responsibility, you should pray for the forgiveness of your errors, so that if there has been any remissness on your part in the discharge of your duties, God may pardon it. In that case, you will receive additional grace from Him".

The verse points to the fact that all things tend to revert to their original condition. Man has been created from the earth and so he tends to revert to it. He should, therefore, bear in mind that he is weak by nature and it is only through the grace of God that he can prosper. So he should repeatedly turn to God that he may be able to maintain progress. Otherwise, his connection with God will become severed and he will drift back to his original low condition. By saying that God is "nigh" the verse warns man that God is very near to him. If he rejects His Message, He can quickly punish him, for His forces do not take long to come. One must not think that though God is near to man, He does not interfere in his affairs. This is clearly wrong; for God does interfere in the affairs of men, answers the prayers of those who call on Him, and comes to their aid.

A note on the tribe of Thamūd will not be out of place here. This tribe has been mentioned by Greek historians. They place it in a period not long before the Christian era. Ḥijr or *Agrā*, as they call it, is given as the home of these people, whom they call Thamudeni. They mention a place near Ḥijr which, according to them, the Arabs called فج الناقة (*Fajjun-Nāqqah*). Ptolemy (بطليموس 140 B.C.) says that near Ḥijr is a place known as Badanata. Abū Ismā'īl, author of the *Futūḥush-Shām*, says: "The tribe of Thamūd filled the land between Bosra (in Syria) and Aden and ruled there. Perhaps they were migrating to the north." The tribes of Ḥimyar and Sabā had gained ascendancy in Yemen. When the Thamūd who ruled in the south of *Aḥqāf* were ejected from their land, they began to move northwards, first to the Ḥijāz, then to Tehama and lastly to Ḥijr. The author of the *Tamadduni 'Arab*, however, says, "This is but a mere conjecture." See also Enc. Isl. under Thamūd.

In fact, the Arabs think that the Thamūd were a branch of the 'Ād, and, like them, lived in Yemen, and when Ḥimyar rose to power, they drove them towards the Ḥijāz. This view, however, is not supported by historical evidence, for no trace of them has yet been discovered in the south. Al-Ḥijr has also been known as *Madā'ini Ṣāliḥ* or the cities of Ṣāliḥ from ancient times and archaeological discoveries show that it had become subject to the Nabataeans, who were natives of Petra, previous to the Christian era. There have been discovered here many inscriptions in the Nabataean language, and some also in the Yemnite language. Scholars versed in Oriental literature have named these inscriptions as Thamūdiyya, i.e. inscriptions belonging to the Thamūd. These discoveries lend support to the view of those geographers who hold that the Thamūd had migrated from the south to the north; for if it had not been so, their language would not have borne a resemblance to the Yemnite language.

Al-Ḥijr, which seems to have been the capital of these people, lies between Medina and Tabūk, and the valley in which it is situated is called *Wādī Qurā*. These people held sway here. Speaking of the Thamūd, the Quran says: *Who hewed out the rocks in the valley* (89:10). The Quran represents them as the immediate successors of the 'Ād (7:75). From 40:31,32, it appears that the Thamūd lived before the time of Moses.

Another consideration leads us to the conclusion that they lived even before the time of Abraham. Toward the end of their days they ruled over northern Arabia and southern Palestine. It appears from the Quran that in the time of Moses, these territories were dominated by the Midianites, who were descended from Abraham, Midian being the son of Abraham from Keturah, his third wife (Gen. 25:1,2). The descendants of Keturah lived in these parts, when Joseph was taken from the well and carried to Egypt. This shows that the Thamūd had altogether been destroyed or their power had greatly declined before the time of Abraham, otherwise the Midianites would not have been able to take possession of their territory.

It is worthy of note that accounts of the Prophets Hūd and Ṣāliḥ have been given at various places in the Quran and everywhere the order observed is the same, viz. the account of Hūd precedes that of Ṣāliḥ which is the true chronological order. This shows that the Quran gives accurately and in their true historical order the facts of history long consigned to oblivion and wrapped in obscurity. This refutes the objection frequently urged against the Quran that it fails to observe true historical order in the narration of the events of history. According to some, Thamūd is only another name for *'Ādi Thāniyah* or the second 'Ād, while according to others they came after the second 'Ād. For further discussion of this subject see "Tafsīr-e-Kabīr" by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, vol. 3, p. 219, where, when speaking of the chronological order of the Prophets, it is only Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, who are prehistoric Prophets, that are really meant. There is a tradition to the effect that some Muslims read a poetic inscription about the Thamūd during the reign of Mu'āwiyah. This tradition is discredited by European critics. The inscription, however, was rediscovered by Captain Haines and

Mr. Wellstedt, in 1834. It was published in the Royal Asiatic Society Journal and was reproduced by Mr. Forester in his works. It is in the Ḥimyari language, which was originally a south Arabian tongue. Modern orientalists call it the Ḥimyari inscription. It was discovered at Ḥiṣnul-Ghurāb, a place near Aden. The following is a translation of it:

No. 1.

"We dwelt, living long and luxuriously in the Zenanas of this spacious mansion: our condition exempt from misfortune and adversity. Rolled in through our channel

The sea, swelling against our castle with angry surge; our fountains flowed, with murmuring fall, above.

The lofty palms: whose keepers planted dry dates in our valley date-grounds; they sowed the arid rice.

We hunted the mountain-goats, and the young hares, with gins and snares; beguiling, we drew forth the fishes.

We walked, with slow, proud gait, in needle-worked many-coloured silk vestments, in whole silks, in grass-green chequered robes.

Over us presided kings far removed from baseness, and stern chastisers of reprobate and wicked men. They noted down for us according to the doctrine of Heber.

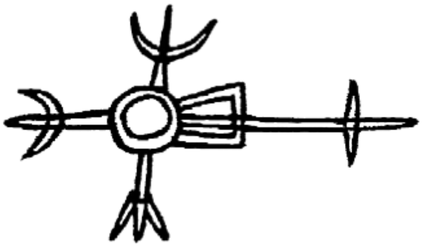
Good judgements written in a book to be kept; and we proclaimed our belief in miracles, in the resurrection, in the return into the nostrils of the breath of life.

Made an inroad upon robbers, and would do us violence: collectively we rode forth . . . we and our generous youth, . . . with stiff and sharp-pointed spears; rushing onward

Proud champions of our families, and our wives; fighting valiantly, upon coursers with long necks, dun-coloured, iron-gray, and bright bay.

With our swords still wounding and piercing our adversaries; until, charging home, we conquered and crushed this refuse of mankind".

No. 2.



No. 3.

"With hostile hate, the men of crime We assailed: onward rushed

Our horses, and trampled them under foot."

No. 4.

"Divided into parts, and inscribed from right to left, and marked with points, this song of triumph, Sarash and Dzerah.

Transpierced, and hunted down, and covered their faces with blackness. Aws the Beni Ac" (Historical Geography of Arabia, p. 382. See also Enc. of Islam under Ḥiṣn al-Ghurāb).

It is clear from the above that the Thamūd were a civilized people and they possessed not only a code of laws but also recorded their decisions to serve as an authority in future cases, as is done in modern civilized

63. They said, ‘O Ṣāliḥ, thou wast among us one in whom we placed our hopes. Dost thou forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are surely in disquieting doubt concerning that to which thou callest us.’[1443]

قَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْنَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ
هٰذَآ اَتَنْهٰنَآ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا
وَاِنَّنَا لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ
مُرِيْبٍ ﴿٦٣﴾

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countries. It is difficult to say whether the people to whom the above inscription refers lived before the Prophet Ṣāliḥ or after him, for possibly a section of the people of Hūd may have been left behind in southern Arabia. At any rate it is a proven fact of history that these people were part of Thamūd tribe and it was among them or among their brethren who had migrated to the north that Ṣāliḥ was raised.

From 7:75 it appears that the Thamūd ruled over plains and hills. Again, from 26:148, 149 we learn that their country abounded in springs and gardens wherein grew date-palms of excellent quality and that they also cultivated lands and grew corn. Thus the Quranic account of these people is fully corroborated by the inscription quoted above.

Their decline seems to have begun soon after the time of Ṣāliḥ, for only a few centuries after his time their name fails to find mention among conquering and victorious nations. Arabia was invaded by an Assyrian king (722-705 B.C.) and the name Thamūd is found mentioned among the conquered tribes in an inscription which he caused to be engraved in memory of his victory. Of the Greek historians, Didorus (80 B.C.), Pliny (79 B.C.) and Ptolemy make mention of the Thamūd. When Justinian, the Roman Emperor, invaded Arabia, his army included 300 Thamūd soldiers, but before the advent of Islam this tribe had become altogether extinct.

1443. Commentary:

The people of Ṣāliḥ here complain that they had hoped that he, promising and talented as he was, would bring them prosperity and glory; but, quite contrary to their expectations, he was going to ruin them by forbidding them to worship what their fathers worshipped. This threw them into disquieting doubt about the truth of his mission.

The above-mentioned expression of opinion by the people of Ṣāliḥ about him was no flattery. He really was the centre of their hopes, as are all Messengers of God who impress their people with their extraordinary talents and great righteousness of conduct from their very childhood, and such was the Holy Prophet of Islam. Abū Bakr, ‘Alī, Zaid and Khadījah all believed in him before they had any knowledge of the details

64. He said, [a]‘O my people, tell me, if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord, and He has granted me mercy from Himself, who then will help me against Allah, if I disobey Him? So you will not but add to my destruction.**1444**

قَالَ يٰقَوۡمِ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ
مِّنۡ رَّبِّىۡ وَاٰتٰٮنِىۡ مِنۡهُ رَحۡمَةً فَمَنۡ يَّنۡصُرُنِىۡ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِنۡ عَصَيۡتُهٗ ۗ فَمَا تَزِيۡدُوۡنَنِىۡ
غَيۡرَ تَخۡسِيۡرٍ ﴿۶۴﴾

65. And O my people, [b]this is the she-camel of Allah as a Sign for you, so let her alone that she may feed in Allah’s earth, and touch her not with harm lest a near punishment seize you.’**1445**

وَيٰقَوۡمِ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَـكُمۡ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوۡهَا
تَاۡكُلۡ فِىۡۤ اَرۡضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوۡهَا بِسُوۡٓءٍ
فَيَاۡخُذَكُمۡ عَذَابٌ قَرِيۡبٌ ﴿۶۵﴾

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[a]11:29, 89. [b]7:74; 17:60; 26:156; 54:28; 91:14.

of his teachings or had seen any sign in support of his mission. They accepted him on the basis of the evidence that his life was spotlessly pure.

The words, *And we are surely in disquieting doubt concerning that to which thou callest* us, mean that, just as the taste of the mouth of a man who is suffering from some internal malady becomes vitiated, similarly, the hearts of these people having become corrupt, the very teaching which had come to remove doubts and misgivings appeared to them as creating doubts in their minds.

1444. Commentary:

Ṣāliḥ here answers the objection of his people mentioned in the preceding verse to the effect that, but for the doubts created in their hearts by his teachings, they would have taken him as their chief. His reply is that if he is a true Messenger of God, it would do him no good to forsake Divine teachings and ally himself with them; it would bring on him only ruin and destruction.

1445. Commentary:

Many legends have been woven round this ناقة (she-camel) of Ṣāliḥ. There is nothing in the Quran to lend support to these fanciful stories. One of these legends, for instance, is that she was miraculously born out of a rock in answer to a prayer of Ṣāliḥ when his people demanded from him a miracle and that she became pregnant at the time of her coming out of the rock, giving birth to a young one immediately after. The Quran, however, nowhere states that there was anything miraculous about her birth. On the contrary, it is clear from 26:154 & 159 that the birth of the she-camel was nothing out of the ordinary and that it was not her birth but the freedom of her movements that was held out as a sign. If the birth of the she-camel had been in any way miraculous, Ṣāliḥ, on the demand of his people for a sign, would have certainly referred them to that extraordinary happening. But, instead, he simply answered that the promised sign would be shown to them, if they interfered with her freedom.

There can be three answers to the question, in what sense was the she-camel a sign:

1. It was a custom in Arabia, as in some other countries as well, that a chief or king would let loose an animal as an emblem of his power and authority and would proclaim that any molestation with its free movements would be severely punished. In accordance with this ancient custom, Ṣāliḥ proclaimed, saying: "This she-camel is for you a sign. If you molest it, you will be held as defying the authority of God and will consequently be visited with Divine punishment."

2. Interference with a beast may mean interference with its rider. To prevent an animal from proceeding on its way amounts to preventing its rider from proceeding on his errand. So when Ṣāliḥ said, *let her alone that she may feed in Allah's earth,* he meant that he himself should not be hindered from going about in Allah's earth for the discharge of his duty of preaching his mission. Ṣāliḥ wanted to go about in the land preaching the word of God, but his people would not allow him to do so. So he told them that the she-camel on which he would go on the mission of preaching the Message of God must be allowed free movement and any interference with her would be regarded as defying God's purpose and would be met with heavenly punishment.

3. Ṣāliḥ had learned to his sorrow that mixing with his people generally led to disturbance. So in order to avoid contact with them he decided to withhold his animals from the common pasture-lands and selected for himself another grazing ground, which did not belong to these people. Similarly, he abandoned the usual time when his people watered their animals and fixed another time for his own she-camel to drink. After having taken all possible precautions to avoid occasions for disturbance at great personal inconvenience, he told his people that if, even in spite of these precautions, there was any disturbance it would certainly be held as a sacrilegious act on their part which would bring down upon them Divine punishment. This interpretation is supported by the fact that old historical records contain references to a valley named فج الناقة (the valley of the she-camel) which is also mentioned in a book of geography written in 150 B.C. Old Greek historians give its name as Badanata which seems to be a corruption of (*Fajjun-Nāqqa*). The name of this valley indicates that Ṣāliḥ fixed a valley for his she-camel to graze in, separate from the one used by his people, so that she might not mix with their herds and thus disturbance might be avoided.

It might be asked, why should a

66. [a]But they hamstrung her; then he said, 'Enjoy yourselves in your houses for three days. This is a promise which is not a lie.'**1446**

فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوْا فِيْ دَارِكُمْ
ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ ۝۶۶

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[a]7:78; 26:158; 54:30; 91:15.

Prophet of God have behaved like worldly kings and potentates and let loose animals to go and graze where they chose. The present verse embodies an indirect answer to this question, for it is nowhere mentioned in the verse that Ṣāliḥ's she-camel was to graze in other people's fields. The verse only says, *let her alone that she may feed in Allah's earth,* which obviously refers to land which was not the private property of any individual. So it was no private land in which, Ṣāliḥ's she-camel was to graze but God's waste, watered with rain from heaven and indebted to no human labour for its cultivation.

It may further be asked why a whole nation was destroyed for killing a mere she-camel. This objection is also based on a clear misconception, for the cause of Divine punishment was not the killing of the she-camel as such but the fact that the killing of the beast constituted an open challenge to threatening his life and declaring that his people were out to defy God's authority. So it was not the killing of the she-camel, but the threat to Ṣāliḥ's own life and the obstruction to his moving about freely in the land with a view to preaching God's word that brought punishment on his people. See also 7:78.

1446. Important Words:

فعقروها (But they hamstrung her). See 7:78.

تمتعوا (Enjoy yourselves) may also mean, benefit by the provision Allah has made for men in this world. See also 2:37 & 4:25.

مکذوب (a lie) is derived from کذب meaning, *inter alia*, he lied or he uttered a falsehood; he said what was untrue, whether intentionally or unintentionally; he found his hopes false or vain. مکذوب is synonymous with کذب (*kazibun*) and means a lie or a falsehood; an untruth, etc. مکذوب also means, one to whom a lie or falsehood or untruth is told. قول مکذوب (originally مکذوب فيه) means, a false saying; a lie (Lane).

Commentary:

All the precautions which Ṣāliḥ took proved futile. His persecutors assaulted and killed his she-camel and thus challenged and insulted the proclamation of God, consequently bringing on themselves the threatened punishment.

The respite of three days was probably meant as a last chance for repentance of which the unlucky

67. So when Our command came, we saved Ṣāliḥ and those who believed with him by Our *special* mercy, and *We saved them* from the ignominy of that day. Surely, thy Lord is Powerful, Mighty.**1447**

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا نَجَّيۡنَا صٰلِحًا وَّالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ بِرَحۡمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنۡ خِزۡيِ يَوۡمِئِذٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الۡقَوِىُّ الۡعَزِيۡزُ ﴿۶۷﴾

68. And [a]punishment overtook those who had done wrong, and they lay prostrate in their houses,**1448**

وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيۡحَةُ فَاَصۡبَحُوۡا فِىۡ دِيَارِهِمۡ جٰثِمِيۡنَ ۙ ﴿۶۸﴾

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[a] 7:79; 26:159; 54:32.

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people, however, did not avail themselves.

1447. Important Words:

القوى (Powerful) is derived from قوى meaning, he was or became strong; vigorous, robust or sturdy. قوى عليه means, he had strength or power sufficient for it; or he had strength or power to endure it; he prevailed against it. قوة which is the noun-infinitive from this root means, strength, power, potency, might or force. قوى therefore means, powerful, strong, mighty. القوى is one of the attributive names of God, meaning, Powerful, Mighty, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Every punishment is a disgrace in itself. The addition of the words, *the ignominy of that day*, therefore shows that there were some special elements of disgrace in the visitation that overtook the people of Ṣāliḥ.

1448. Important Words:

الصيحة (punishment) is derived from صاح which means, he called out or cried vehemently or he shouted with his utmost force or power. صاح عليه means, he rebuked him. صيح بهم means, they were frightened or terrified. صيح فيهم means, they perished. صاحت الشجرة means, the tree became tall. صيحة means, a loud cry; punishment, castigation or chastisement; a hostile or predatory incursion by which a tribe is surprised (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Seven different words and expressions have been used in the Quran to describe the punishment which overtook the tribe of Thamūd. In the verse under comment and in 54:32, the word used is صيحة (punishment); in 7:79, رجفة (an earthquake); in 26:159, عذاب (chastisement); in 27:52, دمرناهم (We utterly destroyed them); in 51:45, صاعقة (thunderbolt; any destructive punishment); in 69:6, طاغية (an extraordinary punishment); and in

69. [a]As though they had never dwelt therein. Behold! Thamūd behaved ungratefully to their Lord; Behold! cursed are *the tribe of* Thamūd.**1449**

كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ ثَمُوْدَاۡ
كَفَرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُوْدَ ﴿۶۹﴾ ٦ع٨ ٦

R. 7.

70. And [b]surely, Our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings. [c]They said, '*We bid you* peace.' He answered, 'Peace *be on you*,' and was not long in bringing a roasted calf.**1450**

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَاۤ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
بِالْبُشْرٰى قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ
فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيْذٍ ﴿۷۰﴾

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[a]10:25. [b]15:52; 51:25. [c]15:53; 51:26.

91:15, دمدم عليهم (their Lord destroyed them completely). Though the words and expressions employed to describe the visitation seem to be different in form, yet they possess no discrepancy in meaning. The only words which appear to be contradictory are *Rajfah, Ṣaiḥah, Ṣā'iqah* and *Ṭāghiyah*. As, however, the last three also mean punishment, therefore if the tribe of Thamūd were destroyed by means of an earthquake, all the above words may be rightly used to describe that catastrophe.

1449. Commentary:

This verse is in substance part of the preceding verse, from which it has been separated to emphasize the greatness of the calamity that overtook the tribe of Thamūd.

It is interesting to note that while in v. 61 the account of the 'Ād concluded with the words, *Behold! cursed are 'Ād, the people of Hūd,* the verse under comment,, which concludes the account of the Thamūd in almost identical words, simply says, *Behold! cursed are the tribe of Thamūd,* omitting the words "the people of Ṣāliḥ." It would be wrong to assume that the words قوم هود (the people of Hūd) were added in v. 61 for the sake of rhyme. The Quran never adds or omits words simply for the sake of rhyme; every word added or omitted has a definite purpose. In v. 61 the words "the people of Hūd" have been added to the word "'Ād" for an historical reason, for 'Ād is in fact the name of two tribes, the first 'Ād and the second 'Ād, and the words "the people of Hūd" have been added to show that it is the first and not the second 'Ād (nor in fact both 'Āds) that are meant there. But as Thamūd was the name of one tribe only, the words "the people of Ṣāliḥ" have been omitted, for their addition would have served no useful purpose.

1450. Important Words:

ابراهيم (Abraham), the Great

Patriarch, was the son of Terah. He was born at Ur of the Chaldees. It is difficult to say when exactly he lived. He is said to have died at the age of 175. Abraham is the progenitor of the two great peoples, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites, who equally revere him. Abraham's real name was Abram but after the birth of Ishmael, according to God's own command, he came to be called Abraham which means the "Father of a multitude" or the "Father of many nations." One branch of his progeny, the Israelites, lived in Canaan and the other, the Ishmaelites, in Arabia. In fulfilment of his famous dream, Abraham took his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar to the desert of Arabia where the posterity of Ishmael grew and multiplied and where in fulness of time and in conformity with God's promise to Abraham, the Holy Prophet of Islam, the greatest of all Prophets, appeared "to bring back the erring flock into the Master's fold!" (Gen. 10:26–25:10, & Jew. Enc.). To this fact the Holy Prophet has himself referred in one of his famous sayings viz. انا دعوۃ ابراھیم i.e. "I am the prayer personified of Abraham". ('Asākir).

Commentary:

There exists a difference of opinion as to who were the "messengers" to whom reference has been made in this verse. Some hold them to be human beings, while others think they were angels. The former view appears to be the correct one, though they have been called "angels" by some for their piety, as Joseph is called "an angel" in 12:32. In this connection see also 17:96.

The reason why God chose these men to convey news of the impending punishment to Lot (see vv. 75 & 78) is not clear from the context, but one explanation appears probable. Both Abraham and Lot, who were closely related, were strangers in that land, and it is quite possible that God sent His word to some pious men of that locality that they might take Lot to a safe place before the visitation actually overtook his people. It should also be remembered that these "messengers" did not come to give the first warning of the punishment. The people of Lot had already been threatened with punishment (15:13-15 & 15:65). The "messengers" came only to inform Lot that the appointed hour of the threatened punishment had arrived, and to take him to a place of safety.

The mention of Abraham has been made in this *Sūrah* only incidentally, to serve as an introduction to the account of the Prophet Lot which follows. It is the story of Lot that is primarily meant to be mentioned here, for this *Sūrah* gives an account of only those Prophets whose people were visited with Divine punishment. The reason why the story of Lot has been introduced with a reference to Abraham is that Lot was one of those persons who had believed in Abraham and had migrated to Syria with him; and, though he himself was a Prophet of God, he was subordinate to Abraham, as Ishmael and Isaac were subordinate to him and as Aaron

71. But [a]when he saw their hands not reaching thereto, he knew not what they were, and conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Fear not, for we have been sent to the people of Lot.'**1451**

فَلَمَّا رَاٰۤ اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ
وَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ
اِنَّاۤ اُرْسِلْنَاۤ اِلٰى قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ؕ ﴿۷۱﴾

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[a] 51:28-29.

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was subordinate to Moses. Hence, when the "messengers" came with the news of the impending destruction of Lot's people, it was only in the fitness of things that God should have first conveyed the news to Abraham, to whom Lot was a subordinate Prophet. As the news about the imminent destruction of Lot's people was conveyed to Abraham in his capacity as the senior Prophet—he himself being not directly concerned with the matter—it was accompanied by glad tidings about the inauguration of a race of good and righteous people through the birth of a son to Abraham. This was done with a view to mitigating the severity of the shock Abraham was likely to feel at the news of the imminent destruction that was to overtake Lot's people.

It is also worth noting that though Lot was a follower of Abraham before he was made a Prophet, he was invested with this rank not through the spiritual medium of Abraham but directly by God, as were also Ishmael and Isaac and Aaron. All those were subordinate Prophets, but the rank of prophethood was conferred upon them directly by God and not through the instrumentality of Abraham or Moses. It is a special privilege and prerogative of the Holy Prophet of Islam that his followers can attain to prophethood through his spiritual influence.

The verse also throws interesting light on the hospitality of Abraham, for he did not tarry to ask the strangers whether they had partaken of food but hastened to bring a roasted calf for them.

1451. Important Words:

لوط (Lot) may etymologically be taken to have been derived from لاط. They say لاط الشیء i.e. he concealed the thing. لاط به means, it (the thing) stuck or adhered to it. لوطه بالطيب (*lawwaṭa-hū*) means, he smeared him or it with much perfume. The Prophet Lot, who was the contemporary of Prophet Abraham, was the ancestor of the Palestinian peoples, Moab and Ammon. As the son of Haran and the grandson of Terah, he was Abraham's nephew. He joined Abraham in the land of Canaan and in the time of famine went with him to Egypt. He preached to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah but they refused to listen to him and ridiculed and

72. And his wife was standing *by*, and she *too* was frightened, whereupon [a]We gave her glad tidings of the birth of Isaac and, after Isaac, of Jacob.**1452**

وَامْرَاَتُهٗ قَآىِٕمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا
بِاِسْحٰقَ ۙ وَمِنْ وَّرَآءِ اِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوْبَ ﴿۷۲﴾

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[a] 21:73; 51:29.

persecuted him; and though Abraham, to whom Lot was a junior and subordinate Prophet prayed for these wicked people and interceded with God on their behalf, they were destroyed on account of their iniquities and transgression (Lane, Enc. Bri. & Jew. Enc.).

Commentary:

Abraham at first took the "messengers" to be ordinary wayfarers, but when they refrained from eating of the roasted calf he had placed before them (see the preceding verse), he realized that they were on some special mission which he had failed to understand. He knew that as ordinary wayfarers they could not refuse his hospitality, for wayfarers in that arid land entirely depended on the hospitality of the inhabitants for their food.

The words, conceived a fear of them, do not mean that Abraham was afraid of the strangers but that, when they did not partake of the food, he feared that he might have done something against the etiquette of hospitality and thus had displeased them. He did not, however, express his fear, for such an expression would have implied that he perhaps took them to be mean and greedy. The guests, it appears, read Abraham's perturbed state of mind from the uneasy expression of his face, so they at once removed his anxiety by telling him that they were in no way displeased and that the reason why they did not partake of food was that their dreadful mission had made them disinclined to eat.

This answer of the visitors also shows that they were not angels; for had they been angels, they would have said that being not human they could not partake of the food.

1452. Important Words:

ضحكت (she was frightened) is formed from ضحك which means: (1) he laughed; (2) he wondered (3) he was frightened or he feared. ضحكت المرأة means, the woman menstruated (Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

When Abraham's wife, Sarah, heard the sad news of the impending destruction of Lot's people, she was naturally frightened and her heart became filled with pain and pity for them.

Sarah's feeling of pity for Lot's people pleased God and He hastened to give her the glad tidings of the birth of a grandson (Jacob) in addition to the announcement of a son (Isaac) that had already been made to Abraham in v.70.

73. [a]She said, ‘Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? This is indeed a strange thing!’[1453]

قَالَتْ يٰوَيْلَتٰۤى ءَاَلِدُ وَاَنَا عَجُوْزٌ وَّهٰذَا بَعْلِىْ شَيْخًا ؕ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَىْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ﴿۷۳﴾

74. [b]They said, ‘Dost thou wonder at Allah’s decree? The mercy of Allah and His blessings are upon you, O people of the House. Surely, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious.’[1454]

قَالُوْۤا اَتَعْجَبِيْنَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ رَحْمَتُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكٰتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ ﴿۷۴﴾

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[a]51:30. [b]51:31.

The present verse also incidentally shows that it was not Isaac but Ishmael whom Abraham offered for sacrifice, for according to it God promised not only a son (Isaac) but also a grandson to Abraham. Thus Isaac, the promised son, was not only to live and marry but also to have a son who was to be called Jacob. It cannot therefore be supposed that God, Who Himself had announced that Isaac was to live and marry and beget children, should have commanded that the selfsame Isaac be offered for sacrifice.

1453. Important Words:

عجوز (old woman) is derived from عجز which means, he lacked strength or power or ability. عجز عن العمل means, he was unable to do the work; he was too old to do it. عجزت المرأة means, the woman became old. The word عجوز has a variety of meanings, some of which are, an old and aged woman; a woman old and weak; a man’s wife whether old or young; also a woman’s husband; an old or aged man; a man old and weak (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse does not mean that the expression of surprise on the part of Abraham’s wife implied that she doubted the truth of the news that had been communicated to her by God. It is far from an ordinary believing woman to express doubt with regard to the great and wonderful powers of God, much further from the wife of a Prophet who had already witnessed many signs of the power of God. In fact, she wondered at the unusual news that a son would be born to her at such an advanced age. Her surprise was, therefore, at the magnitude of the boon that was about to be conferred on her. Abraham himself had expressed similar surprise when the glad tidings about the birth of a son in his extreme old age was given to him (see 15:55-57).

1454. Important Words:

مجيد (Glorious) is derived from مجد which means, he was or became

75. And when fear left Abraham, and the glad tidings came to him, he began disputing with Us about the people of Lot.1455

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنۡ اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ الرَّوۡعُ وَجَآءَتۡهُ الۡبُشۡرٰی یُجَادِلُنَا فِیۡ قَوۡمِ لُوۡطٍ ؕ﴿٧٥﴾

76. [a]Indeed, Abraham was clement, tender-hearted, and oft-turning *to God.*1456

اِنَّ اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ لَحَلِیۡمٌ اَوَّاهٌ مُّنِیۡبٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

77. 'O Abraham, turn away from this. Surely, the command

یٰۤاِبۡرٰهِیۡمُ اَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّهٗ

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[a] 9:114.

glorious, noble, in a state of honour or dignity. مجید as an epithet of God signifies the Glorious or Great, or Great in dignity Who gives liberally or bountifully or the Bountiful and Beneficent. When used about عرش it signifies exalted; sublime; noble (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The Shia section of Muslims do not include the wives of the Holy Prophet in his اهل بیت (people of his house) while in this verse the term is definitely applied to the wife of Abraham, because no child had yet been born to her. In fact, whenever this term is used in the Quran in respect of a Prophet, it invariably includes his wife or wives.

1455. Commentary:

The fear of Abraham was not concerning his own person but concerning the people of Lot, an evidence of his great righteousness and nobility of character. The news first came to Abraham as a great shock. He did not know what to do. But when he was given the cheering news of the birth of a son who was to be the father of a great nation, he felt some relief and then began to plead with God for the doomed people.

1456. Important Words:

منیب (oft-turning) is derived from ناب. They say ناب الیه i.e. he came to him time after time. ناب عنه means, he acted as his substitute; he served for him. ناب الی الله or اناب الی الله means, he turned to God time after time; he returned from disobedience to God; he returned unto God repenting. منیب means, one who turns to God time after time; one who turns to Him repenting; a person making another supply his or another's place (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse constitutes a brief but eloquent and powerful tribute to Abraham.

of thy Lord has gone forth, and surely, there is coming to them a punishment that cannot be averted.'[1457]

قَدْ جَآءَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَاِنَّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِمْ
عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُوْدٍ ﴿٧٧﴾

78. And [a]when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved on account of them and felt helpless on their behalf and he said, 'This is a distressful day.'[1458]

وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوْطًا سِیْٓءَ بِهِمْ
وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَّقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ
عَصِيْبٌ ﴿٧٨﴾

79. And his people came to him running towards him trembling *with rage*; and before this *too* [b]they used to do evils. He said, 'O my people, [c]these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So [d]fear Allah and disgrace

وَجَآءَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ يُهْرَعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَمِنْ
قَبْلُ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ بَنَاتِيْ هُنَّ اَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ فِيْ ضَيْفِيْ ؕ اَلَيْسَ

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[a] 29:34. [b] 15:68. [c] 7:81; 29:29. [d] 15:72.

1457. Commentary:

The tone of the Divine reply shows God's great regard for Abraham. Instead of directly rejecting his request, God lovingly asks him to let the matter go, for His decree has already come to pass and the punishment could not now be averted.

1458. Important Words:

ضاق بهم ذرعا (felt helpless on their behalf) is a peculiar Arabic expression. The Arabs say ضاق بالامر ذرعا which literally means, he stretched forth his arm to it but his arm did not reach it and he was unable to do or accomplish the thing or affair; or he lacked the strength or power to do the thing; or he found no way of escape from what was disagreeable in the affair (Lane).

Commentary:

Some commentators hold the view that Lot's trouble was due to the visitors having stayed with him against his will, refusing to leave his house. The truth, however, seems to be quite the reverse; for, as the Bible clearly states, when the strangers reached near Lot's residence, he himself invited them to it as his guests, but, probably fearing lest by their stay he might be inconvenienced, they asked to be excused. This naturally pained Lot (Gen. ch. 19).

مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيْدٌ ﴿٧٩﴾

me not in the presence of my guests. Is there not among you any right-minded man?'[1459]

1459. Important Words:

يهرعون (came running trembling with rage) is derived from هرع. They say هرع اليه (*hara'a*) i.e. he went to him quickly and in a perturbed state of mind. هرع الرجل (*huria*) or اهرع الرجل (*ahra'a*) means, the man went quickly; and اهرع الرجل (*uhri'a*) means, the man was made to tremble with rage, fear, cold or weakness; he was made to go fast. The Arabs say, اقبل الشيخ يهرع (*yuhra'u*) i.e. the old man came fast and trembling or came running in a perturbed state of mind. (Aqrab).

Commentary:

In ancient times, generally every town had a separate government of its own, which was carried on by the chiefs of the place by mutual consultation as a sort of republic: or by a king whose authority was confined to one village or a number of villages. The two towns, Sodom and Gomorrah, with which Lot was connected had such a government. They possessed no established government in the modern sense of the word (Gen. ch. 14).

The inhabitants of these two towns had adopted the calling of the road and used to plunder wayfarers (Jew. Enc. under "Sodom"). A people who thus molested their neighbours naturally had to be on their guard against them and to be constantly apprehensive of reprisals. Besides, the people of Sodom were practically in a state of war with their neighbours (Gen. 14). Therefore they would not allow strangers to enter their towns, lest the latter should open the gates at night and let in the enemy. Lot, like all Prophets of God, being an hospitable man, naturally used to look after the comfort of strangers and entertain them (15:71). His people, apprehensive as they were, repeatedly warned him to give up that practice. So when, on this occasion, he brought strangers into his house, his townsmen became infuriated and hastened to him with angry faces, because they thought they now had a suitable opportunity to punish him for giving shelter to strangers in defiance of their protests.

Some commentators say that these visitors had come in the form of handsome boys and that Lot's people came running to him with evil intent. But there is nothing in the context to warrant such an inference. On the contrary in 15:71 we read that on seeing the strangers with Lot, his people demanded of him why he had brought these strangers when they had already forbidden him to do so. If they had come with an evil intention, they should have rejoiced at the sight of the strangers and not been displeased at seeing them. Moreover, vv. 15:68-70 signify that Lot's people rejoiced at having an opportunity to punish and disgrace him because he defied their protests. They were angry

80. They answered, ‘Thou surely knowest that we have no claim on thy daughters, and thou

قَالُوْا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِيْ بَنٰتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ ۚ
وَاِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيْدُ ﴿٨٠﴾

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with him because he had brought in the strangers against their protests and were glad that they now had an opportunity to settle old scores with him once for all.

The words, *before this too they used to do evil,* show that in view of their past mischievous behaviour Lot feared lest his people should do any mischief and thus disgrace him in the presence of his guests. There is no reference here to any particular mischief. They were wicked people, therefore Lot was naturally afraid that they might do harm.

When the townsmen came to Lot running, he referred to his two daughters who had been married in the town and said, they are purer for you, meaning that if his people insulted his guests and turned them out, they would thereby disgrace themselves; but if they really entertained fear that he might do them harm in league with the strangers, they had his daughters in their custody and they could wreak vengeance on him by punishing them. That was a better and purer course for them to adopt, for in that way they would also avoid the disgraceful act of insulting the guests.

There can be nothing more absurd than to say that Lot offered his daughters to his wicked people to satisfy their lust. Even the meanest of men would not do such a shameful and dishonourable act; then how could a noble Prophet of God, who must possess a far greater sense of honour than ordinary men, stoop to such a mean course? The absurd story given in the Bible seems to be responsible for so stupid an interpretation of this Quranic verse by some commentators.

Some other commentators have suggested that Lot offered his daughters in marriage, but this explanation also seems unsatisfactory. It appears from the Bible that Lot had two daughters who were married. But if it be supposed that they were unmarried, they could be married only to two of the townsmen. How could then this offer give satisfaction to a large number of people? And how was it relevant to their demand?

There is, however, one explanation which seems plausible, if it be supposed that the people came with the intention which these commentators ascribe to them. A Prophet is, as it were, the father of his people, so he can speak of their women as his daughters.

So when Lot said to the people, "these are my daughters; they are purer for you," he, as a Prophet and an old man, must have referred to their own wives as his daughters, who, of course, were purer for them, He thus asked them to follow the lawful course rather than satisfy their lust unnaturally.

surely knowest what we desire.'1460

81. He said, 'Would that I had power *to deal* with you, or I should betake myself to a mighty support *for shelter.*'1461

قَالَ لَوْ اَنَّ لِيْ بِكُمْ قُوَّةً اَوْ اٰوِيْٓ اِلٰى رُكْنٍ شَدِيْدٍ ۝٨١

82. *The messengers* said, 'O Lot, we are the messengers of thy Lord. They shall by no means

قَالُوْا يٰلُوْطُ اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَّصِلُوْٓا اِلَيْكَ فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ

1460. Commentary:

When Lot told his townsmen that they had his daughters in their custody and that, if he did anything which was injurious to their interests they might avenge themselves on him through his daughters, he was in fact offering his daughters as hostages. Now, the rule with regard to hostages was that only males were accepted as such (Enc. Bri.) so the people told Lot that they could not take his daughters as hostages for that was against their custom and law. The words, *we have no claim on thy daughters,* clearly show that they had not come with the motives which most commentators ascribe to them, for a people who had become so depraved and corrupt in their morals as the people of Lot were, could raise no question of claim or no claim, right or no right about the satisfaction of their carnal passions.

The words, *thou surely knowest what we desire,* mean, "You know that what we at present want is to prevent the coming of strangers, so to say that we should accept hostages and leave the strangers alone is an offer which we cannot accept."

1461. Important Words:

ركن (support). They say ركن اليه (*rakana*) i.e. he inclined to him or it; he trusted or relied upon him or it so as to become easy or quiet in mind; he leaned, rested or relied upon him. ركن فى المنزل means, he kept tenaciously to the abode and did not relinquish it. ركن (*rukn*) means, side or outward part of a thing; corner or angle; a stay or support of any kind; a thing whereby one is strengthened; near relations or clan or tribe by whom one is aided and strengthened; a noble or high person; also might and resistance; a thing or event of great magnitude (Lane).

Commentary:

Lot says that if he had possessed any power, he would have resisted these mischievous people; but he was powerless against them.

The words, *I should betake myself to a mighty support for shelter,* mean that now the only course left to him was that he should seek refuge with God and beg Him to send upon them His punishment.

reach thee. So [a]depart with thy family [b]in a part of the night, and let none of you look back, but thy wife. Surely, what is going to befall them shall *also* befall her. Verily, [c]their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning nigh?'[1462]

وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَكَ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ مُصِيْبُهَا مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ
مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ ؕ اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ
بِقَرِيْبٍ ﴿۸۲﴾

83. [d]So when Our command came, [e]We turned that *town* upside down and We rained upon it stones of clay, layer upon layer,[1463]

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا
وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ ۬ۙ
مَّنْضُوْدٍ ﴿۸۳﴾

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[a]15:66. [b]7:84; 15:61; 29:34. [c]15:67. [d]15:75. [e]51:34.

1462. Commentary:

When the strangers heard Lot pathetically say to his people that he would pray to God against them, they, who had till then kept the matter secret, revealed to him that God had already decreed their punishment and that it was that decree which they had come to communicate to him. They also announced to him that the threatened punishment would not affect his اهل (family or followers) who would be saved except his wife who was doomed.

The verse mentions the time of morning as the time of the coming punishment because the morning is generally the time of negligence and is thus best suited to remind wicked people of the real cause of Divine chastisement.

1463. Important Words:

سجيل (stones of clay) is derived from سجل (*sajjala*) which is again derived from سجل (*sajala*). They say سجل القرآن (*sajjalal-Quran*) i.e. he read or recited the Quran continuously.

سجل القاضي (*sajjalal-Qāḍī*) means, the judge decided judicially and recorded the sentence in his record. سجل به means, he threw it from above. سجيل means, stones like lumps of dry or tough clay; stones of clay. The Quranic words mean, stones of clay which had been written or decreed for them that they should be punished therewith (Lane & Aqrab).

منضود (layer upon layer) is derived from نضد which means, he put goods or commodities one upon another, or he put or set them together in regular order; he put them one upon another or side by side compactly or he set them together in regular order (Lane).

Commentary:

It appears that the people of Lot were destroyed by a terrible earthquake. Violent earthquakes often turn parts of the earth upside down and fragments of earth fly off into the

84. [a]Marked *for them* in the decree of thy Lord. And such *punishment* is not far from the wrongdoers *of the present age.*[1464]

مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ ﴿٨٤﴾

R. 8.

85. [b]And to Midian *We sent* their brother Shu‘aib. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allah. You have no God other than Him. And [c]give not short measure and short weight. I see you in *a state of* prosperity and I fear for you the punishment of a destructive day.[1465]

وَإِلٰى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ۖ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ إِنِّيْٓ أَرٰىكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَّإِنِّيْٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيْطٍ ﴿٨٥﴾

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[a]51:35. [b]7:86; 29:37. [c]26:182, 183.

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air and then fall down.

The expression, layer upon layer, suggests that the earthquake shocks were repeated over some length of time.

1464. Commentary:

The words, *marked for them*, mean that it had been decreed from eternity that these stones should become the cause for the destruction of Lot’s people.

The latter portion of the verse points out that the account of the destruction of the people of Lot has not been given here as a story but is intended to give a warning that a similar destructive punishment would overtake the disbelieving people of the Holy Prophet’s time if they persisted in rejecting him.

It may also be noted here that there are some serious differences in the accounts about Lot as given in the Quran and the Bible: (1) The Bible represents Lot as a quarrelsome and jealous person, while the Quran says that he was a righteous servant of God. (2) The Bible says that the three visitors partook of the food presented to them by Abraham, declaring at the same time that one of them was God Himself, the other two being angels. The Quran denies all this. (3) According to the Bible, Lot offered his daughters for fornication, while the Quran declares that they were merely offered as hostages. (4) The Bible says that Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt but the Quran rejects all such puerile stories. Any sensible person can see which of the two accounts is more sensible and correct.

1465. Important Words:

محيط (destructive) is derived from حاط.

They say حاط به i.e. he guarded, kept, protected or took care of him or it; he defended him or he paid frequent attention to him or it. احاط به means, he or it surrounded, encompassed or enclosed it or him. They say احیط فلان i.e. such a one was destroyed, or his destruction drew near. The Quranic words ان ربك احاط بالناس mean, verily thy Lord hath men in His grasp or power, or He hath destroyed them or is about to destroy them. محیط means, surrounding, encompassing or enclosing. The words, عذاب یوم محیط mean, the punishment of a day which shall beset people on every side so that there will be no way of escape from it; or the punishment of a destructive day (Lane).

مدین (Midian) was a son of Abraham from his third wife, Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2). His descendants were all called Midian, in accordance with ancient usage. Or it may be that originally they were called "Banū Midian" (children of Midian) but these words later became abbreviated into Midian. The metropolis of these people was also called Midian, which itself may be an abbreviation of some such name as *Dūri Midian* (the houses of Midian). This town was situated on the Gulf of ‘Akabah, on the Arabian coast, at a distance of some six or seven miles from the sea. This is why in some ancient books of geography it is mentioned as a sea port, while in others it is shown as an inland town. The trade caravans going from Arabia to Egypt passed through it. There are still several small townships known as Midian, but the original town no longer exists. The descendants of Midian lived in the north of the Hijaz and it is they who built this town. It was hither that Moses fled for refuge when Pharaoh and his nobles sought to kill him and it was in the neighbourhood of Midian that he stayed with the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea. The fact that the word مدین (Midian) possesses a close resemblance to مدینه (Medina), the town of the Holy Prophet, constitutes one of the many similarities Moses had with the Holy Prophet. See also 7:86.

شعیب (Shu‘aib). See 7:86.

Commentary:

Some commentators think that Shu‘aib was the father-in-law of Moses and that Moses had gone to live with him after he had killed an Israelite. The Bible, however, gives the name of the father-in-law of Moses as Jethro (Exod. 3:1). Now Jethro and Shu‘aib cannot be the same person, nor was Shu‘aib the father-in-law of Moses. The following facts support this view:

(1) Shu‘aib has been mentioned in the Quran at several places and so has the father-in-law of Moses, but nowhere in the Quran is there the slightest hint that Shu‘aib and the father-in-law of Moses were the same person nor has the father-in-law of Moses anywhere been referred to as a Prophet of God.

(2) The Quran clearly states that Moses was raised as a Prophet after the destruction of the people of Midian (7:104), which definitely shows that they were not contemporaries.

86. [a]And O my people, give full measure and full weight with equity, and defraud not people of their things and commit not iniquity in the earth, causing disorder.[1466]

وَيٰقَوْمِ اَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾

87. That which is left *with you* by Allah is better for you, if you

بَقِيَّتُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ

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[a] 7:86; 26:184.

(3) The Quran also states that Shu‘aib appeared not long after Lot, so he could not be a contemporary of Moses (v. 90 below).

(4) If Shu‘aib had been the contemporary and father-in-law of Moses, he would not have failed to refer to the destruction of Pharaoh and his people, which had taken place only recently, when he had referred to the destruction of the peoples of Noah, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ (v. 90), but he did not do so.

The following important facts about the people of Shu‘aib also emerge from this and other verses of the Quran: (a) that, like the Holy Prophet, it was chiefly at the hands of the people of his town that Shu‘aib met with opposition (7:89); (b) that his people not only practised idolatry, but were also fraudulent in their dealings with one another; (c) that they were a well-to-do and prosperous people; (d) that they had adopted the calling of the road and were given to plundering and dacoity (7:86 & 11:86 below). As these people lived on the trade route to Egypt, they used to plunder the caravans which passed by that way. This inference receives further support from the fact that near Midian there was a wood which was peopled by the descendants of Dedan, a nephew of Midian, being the child of another son of Abraham from Keturah (Gen. 25:3). These people are referred to in the Quran as اصحاب الایکة i.e. the People of the Wood (15:79 & 26:177) and Shu‘aib preached to them as he preached to the people of Midian (26:178-192). From 15:80 it appears that this wood or jungle lay on a trade route, so it served as a good hiding place for the people of Midian to plunder travellers.

The words, *the punishment of a destructive day,* signify that the punishment of that day will be thoroughly destructive. The words may also mean that the day will not end until the whole people are annihilated. See the meaning of the word محیط (destructive) above.

1466. Commentary:

The verse hints at the importance of fair and just dealings, especially in business matters.

are believers. And I am not a keeper over you.'[1467]

مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيۡكُمۡ بِحَفِيۡظٍ ﴿۸۷﴾

88. They replied, 'O Shu'aib, does thy Prayer bid thee that we should leave what our fathers worshipped, or that we cease to do with our property what we please? Thou art *indeed* very intelligent *and* right-minded.'[1468]

قَالُوۡا يٰشُعَيۡبُ اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاۡمُرُكَ اَنۡ نَّتۡرُكَ مَا يَعۡبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَاۤ اَوۡ اَنۡ نَّفۡعَلَ فِىۡۤ اَمۡوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا ؕ اِنَّكَ لَاَنۡتَ الۡحَلِيۡمُ الرَّشِيۡدُ ﴿۸۸﴾

89. He said, [a]'O my people, tell me if I stand on a clear evidence from my Lord, and He has provided me from Himself with a handsome provision, *what*

قَالَ يٰقَوۡمِ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّىۡ وَرَزَقَنِىۡ مِنۡهُ رِزۡقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَاۤ اُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ اُخَالِفَكُمۡ اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنۡهٰٮكُمۡ

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[a] 11:64.

1467. Commentary:

The word بقية (that which is left) is used to express goodness and perfection. The term بقية القوم is applied to a person who is one of the best men of his people or community. See also 2:249. The word بقية therefore, here signifies wealth earned by fair and honest means and in accordance with the laws of God. It may also mean God-given powers and capabilities.

By the words, *I am not a keeper over you,* Shu'aib warns his people that they should not remain under the illusion that he would be able to save them from Divine punishment. The words embody the implication that such is the goodness of the Prophets of God that disbelievers, notwithstanding their hostility towards them, look upon them as a source of protection and blessing.

1468. Commentary:

The words, *does thy Prayer bid thee,* etc. have been spoken ironically. Shu'aib's opponents mean to say that they see nothing good in him except that he is given to the saying of Prayers and has no concern with the affairs of the world, not even knowing how to work and earn a respectable living. Should they too give themselves up to praying, which to him was the chief business of life, and part company with their hardly-won wealth and worldly honour? They were not going to be so foolish as to act upon his advice.

answer will you give to Him? And I do not desire to do against you the very thing which [a]I ask you not to do. I only desire reform as far as I can. There is no power in me save through Allah. In Him do I trust and to Him do I return.[1469]

عَنۡهُ ؕ اِنۡ اُرِیۡدُ اِلَّا الۡاِصۡلَاحَ مَا اسۡتَطَعۡتُ ؕ وَمَا تَوۡفِیۡقِیۡۤ اِلَّا بِاللّٰہِ ؕ عَلَیۡہِ تَوَکَّلۡتُ وَ اِلَیۡہِ اُنِیۡبُ ﴿۸۹﴾

90. And O my people, let not *your* hostility towards me lead you to this that there should befall you the like of that which befell the people of Noah or the people of Hūd or the people of

وَیٰقَوۡمِ لَا یَجۡرِمَنَّکُمۡ شِقَاقِیۡۤ اَنۡ یُّصِیۡبَکُمۡ مِّثۡلُ مَاۤ اَصَابَ قَوۡمَ نُوۡحٍ اَوۡ قَوۡمَ ہُوۡدٍ اَوۡ قَوۡمَ صٰلِحٍ ؕ وَمَا قَوۡمُ لُوۡطٍ

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[a] 7:94.

1469. Important Words:

توفیق (power) is the noun-infinitive from وفّق (*waffaqa*) which is the transitive form of the verb وفق (*wafiqa*). They say وفق امرہ i.e. his affair or case was right or agreeable with what was desired. وفّقہ الامر (*waffaqa-hū*) means, he disposed or adapted him to a thing; or he made him fit for it. وفّقہ اللہ means, God disposed or directed him to the right course; or He made him to take or follow the right course; or He directed him by inspiration to that which was good. توفیق means, being disposed or directed to take the right course or being granted fitness or power to do the right thing (Tāj).

Commentary:

This verse contains an answer to the jibes of Shu‘aib's opponents. He says to them: "It is not my Prayers but my God Who bids me preach to you. Now let me know if the word of God should come to me with truth and He should, out of His bounty, provide me with lawful sustenance, have I not then a right to exhort you to righteousness and to prohibit you from things which I have shown you to be injurious?"

This verse also sheds light on the position of a heavenly Messenger. Every Messenger of God has to face similar difficulties. In the beginning people show impatience at his preaching. They think that he wants to exercise authority over them and to bring compulsion to bear upon them. The second stage is that of indifference when they leave him alone. But neither the impatience nor the indifference of his opponents can stop a Prophet from preaching his Message. He carries on his work with

Ṣāliḥ; and the people of Lot are not far from you.[1470]

مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ ۝٩٠

91. And [a]seek forgiveness of your Lord; then turn to Him *whole-heartedly*. Verily, my Lord is Merciful, Most Loving.'[1471]

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّ

رَبِّيْ رَحِيْمٌ وَّدُوْدٌ ۝٩١

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[a] See 11:4.

unabated zeal in all circumstances till God crowns his efforts with success.

1470. Commentary:

This verse shows that Shu'aib came after Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ and Lot (and for that matter after Abraham also), but lived before the time of Moses, for he does not here speak of the people of Moses, although Moses lived with his people in the very territory of the people of Shu'aib. See also note on v. 85 above.

1471. Important Words:

ودود (Most Loving) is derived from ود. They say وده i.e. he loved him or it. وددت لو كان كذا means, I wished that it had been so. ود (*wud*) ود (*wid*), ود (*wad*) and مودة (*mawaddat*) as also وداد (*widād*), وداد (*wadad*) and وداد (*wudād*) are all infinitive nouns meaning love and affection. ود (*wid*), ود (*wud*) and ود (*wad*) also mean, a person loved, an object of love. ودود means, a person who loves much; very loving or affectionate. الودود is an attribute of God meaning, the Loving towards His servants; Very Loving or Most Loving; also He Who is beloved in the hearts of His servants (Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is often asserted by the opponents of Islam that it encourages sin as it keeps open the door of repentance. This objection is based on a misunderstanding of توبة i.e. Islamic repentance توبة does not consist in merely uttering the words "I regret" or "I repent" and then thinking that one's sins will be forgiven. Such is not the Islamic conception of repentance. Islam does not recognize that transition from evil to virtue or ascent from a lower grade of virtue to a higher one can be attained in one jump. These conditions are attained through many stages of spiritual development. When a sinner turns to God, he begins by subjecting himself to a sort of inner stock-taking which makes him feel a sense of shame or contrition as a result of which he endeavours to seek shelter in God. This is the stage of استغفار. Then comes the stage of استعاذة i.e. seeking Divine protection from the evil consequences of one's misdeeds. Finally there is the stage of توبة (repentance) which signifies turning to God and loving Him with heart and soul and establishing a true connection with Him. In short, توبة (repentance) does

92. They replied, ‘O Shu‘aib, we do not understand much of that which thou sayest, and [a]surely, we see that thou art weak among us. And were it not for thy tribe, we would surely stone thee. And thou holdest no strong position among us.’[1472]

قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَقُوْلُ وَاِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْنَا ضَعِيْفًا ۚ وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنٰكَ ۫ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيْزٍ ﴿۹۲﴾

93. He said, ‘O my people, is my tribe mightier with you than Allah? And you have cast Him behind your backs as neglected. Surely, my Lord encompasses all that you do.[1473]

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَهْطِيْٓ اَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُ وَرَآءَكُمْ ظِهْرِيًّا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿۹۳﴾

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[a] 7:89.

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not mean mere verbal asking for forgiveness but constitutes one of the several stages which a man has to traverse when he eschews evil and turns to virtue or when he ascends from one stage of virtue to a higher one. It is difficult to find fault with this concept of توبة (repentance) and only one ignorant of human psychology can take exception to it.

The grades and stages of spiritual development briefly referred to above are all described in the Quran in detail.

1472. Important Words:

رهطك (thy tribe). رهط means, a man’s people or tribe consisting of his nearer relations or near kinsfolk; a number of men less than ten among whom there is no woman; or a number from three to ten or from seven to ten. كان في المدينة تسعة رهط means, there were in the city nine men (Lane).

1473. Commentary:

The Prophets are very jealous about the honour of God. Anyone else in Shu‘aib’s place would have been glad to see that his clan was so powerful that his enemy refrained from doing him harm out of fear of his tribesmen. But it makes Shu‘aib indignant that his security from harm has been ascribed to his clan and not to the protection of God, and he sharply rebukes his opponents saying: "Is my clan more powerful than God so that you are afraid to harm me because of them but you do not fear God and continue to disobey Him by indulging in plunder and fraud". Shu‘aib does not mind, by thus despising his own clan, running the risk of estranging them or making them angry. Only one thought holds sway over his mind and that thought relates to the honour of his God.

94. And [a]O my people, act as best you can, I *too* am acting. You will soon know on whom befalls a punishment that will disgrace him, and who it is that is a liar. And wait; surely, I wait with you.'[1474]

وَيٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ
عَامِلٌ ؕ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ
عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ؕ
وَارْتَقِبُوْۤا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ رَقِيْبٌ ﴿۹۴﴾

95. And when Our command came, We saved Shu'aib and those who had believed with him by Our *special* mercy; and [b]chastisement seized those who had done wrong, so that they lay prostrate in their houses,[1475]

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَاَخَذَتِ الَّذِيْنَ
ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دِيَارِهِمْ
جٰثِمِيْنَ ۙ ﴿۹۵﴾

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[a]6:136; 39:40. [b]7:92; 26:190; 29:38.

The Holy Prophet also never failed to display his love and jealousy for God in a manner worthy of his great spiritual position. One such opportunity occurred at Uḥud when, the Muslims suffered a temporary defeat and the infidels, thinking that the Prophet had been killed, shouted slogans glorifying their national idol, Hubal. On that critical occasion, when considerations of safety demanded complete silence, the Holy Prophet rebuked the Muslims for keeping silent and urged them to glorify God at the top of their voices.

1474. Important Words:

على مكانتكم (as best you can). See 6:136.

Commentary:

The words, *act as best you can, I too am acting,* mean that they should go on working according to their own lights and plans, and he could work as guided by his faith. The results would show who was working in accordance with God's will and who was seeking to defy and frustrate His purpose.

In fact, Prophets of God always ask their people to leave the matter to God and wait for His decision, but their opponents always seek to take the matter into their own hands. The result invariably is that their efforts to destroy the Prophet and his followers prove futile and they themselves are destroyed.

1475. Commentary:

Shu'aib lived in a territory where earthquakes were frequent. So it is quite possible that, as the words apparently show, his people should have been visited with an earthquake: but the word صيحة (for which see v. 68

96. [a]As though they had never dwelt there. Behold! how Midian were cut off, even as Thamūd had been cut off.**1476**

كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُوْدُ ﴿۹۶﴾ ع ۸ ۱۲

R. 9.

97. And, surely, [b]We sent Moses with Our Signs and manifest authority,**1477**

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰی بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۹۷﴾

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[a]7:93. [b]14:6; 23:46; 40:24.

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above) may also mean any other punishment and the words, *they lay prostrate in their houses,* may have been used in a figurative sense, meaning that their power was broken by some dreadful visitation and they met with disgrace and humiliation, as if thrown into the dust.

1476. Commentary:

See 11:61, 69 above.

1477. Commentary:

As already stated, the present *Sūrah* discusses the history of only those Prophets whose peoples were ultimately destroyed. The present and the following few verses deal with Moses' mission to Pharaoh and his people who rejected him and therefore met with destruction. The *Sūrah* makes no reference to the Israelites, for the obvious reason that they believed in Moses' and became heirs to Divine blessings.

Incidentally, it may be noted here that the Biblical account of Moses as given in Exod. chapters 2, 3 & 4, differs from the Quranic description in several points:

1. According to the Bible, Moses was not cast into the river, but was concealed under a basket in the bushes by the side of the river (Exod. 2:3). According to the Quran, however, he was cast into the river (20:40). The name Moses, as explained in Exod. 2:10 supports the Quranic version, for Moses was so called because he "was saved from water." See also note under 2:54.

2. According to the Bible, the Egyptian who died at the hands of Moses was killed by him intentionally (Exod. 2:11,12), while according to the Quran, Moses did not strike the man with the intention of killing him. The man died only accidentally (28:16). Thus the Bible represents Moses as a wilful murderer, while the Quran acquits him of this heinous act.

3. According to the Bible, Moses saw two Hebrews quarrelling with each other (Exod. 2:13,14); while the Quran says that one was a Hebrew and the other an Egyptian (28:19).

4. The Quran differs from the Bible in the details of the incident at the well. The Bible says that there were as many as seven daughters of the

priest of Midian at the well. (Exod. 2:16), while according to the Quran there were only two (28:24). Again, according to the Bible, the girls filled their troughs to water their father's flock, but the shepherds came and drove them away (Exod. 2:16), while according to the Quran the girls kept themselves and their flock away owing to modesty (28:24). Again, the Bible represents Moses as standing up against the shepherds and helping the girls (Exod. 2:17), while according to the Quran, there was no standing up against the shepherds on the part of Moses; he only watered the flock of the girls (28:25).

5. According to the Bible, Moses was bidden to take his people out of Egypt without apprising Pharaoh of their flight. He is, in fact, represented as playing a trick on Pharaoh and deceiving him (Exod. 3:18). But the Quran represents him as being bidden by God to go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the children of Israel go with him (20:48).

6. According to the Bible, Moses bade the Israelite women to borrow from their Egyptian neighbours their ornaments, their gold, their silver and their raiment with a view to robbing them of their valuables (Exod. 3:22). According to the Quran, they were not bidden by God to take the ornaments from the Egyptians; they did so deceitfully and were themselves responsible for the deceit (20:88).

7. The hand of Moses, says the Bible, was white and its whiteness was due to leprosy (Exod. 4:6). According to the Quran his hand was indeed brightly white, but its whiteness was not due to any disease. It constituted a Divine sign (20:23).

8. The Bible represents Aaron not as a real brother of Moses or his brother from the side of his mother, but a brother in the sense that he was a member of the Levite family (Exod. 4:14). The Quran, however, represents him as a real brother of Moses, or at least his brother from the side of his mother (20:95).

9. According to the Bible, Aaron took part with the Israelites in taking the calf for an idol; nay, it even represents him as the very author of the calf-worship (Exod. 32:35). But the Quran exonerates him of this charge (20:91).

It is unnecessary to remark here that both reason and recent research in history agree that of the two versions the Quranic one is correct.

In fact, Christian writers themselves have admitted the inaccuracy of the Biblical account (Enc. Bri. under "Moses"). The writer of this article declares that a great part of the Ḥamūrābī teaching has been incorporated in the Pentateuch. He also considers the Biblical account showing Aaron as having taken part in calf-worship as spurious and a later addition, and infers that there have been other similar interpolations in the Bible.

The word Hārūn (Aaron) has no significance in Hebrew. According to modern scholars, the name is to be found in the languages of North Arabia (Enc. Bri.). This shows that

98. [a]To Pharaoh and his chiefs; but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not at all rightful.[1478]

اِلٰی فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۠ئِهٖ فَاتَّبَعُوْۤا اَمْرَ
فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيْدٍ ﴿۹۸﴾

99. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and will bring them down into the Fire, *even as cattle are brought to a watering-place*. And evil is the watering-place arrived at.[1479]

يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَاَوْرَدَهُمُ
النَّارَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُوْدُ ﴿۹۹﴾

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[a] 23:47; 40:25.

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the Hebrews had, till then, some connection with Arabic, their original tongue.

1478. Commentary:

Pharaoh, as already stated, was not the name of any particular monarch (2:50). It was the title of the rulers of Egypt. The ruler of the Nile valley and Alexandria was called Pharaoh. This title was in vogue before the conquest of Egypt by the Romans. As, after the advent of the Romans, the government of the country passed into foreign hands, the title of Pharaoh fell into disuse, for the foreign conquerors adopted their own titles.

It also appears that Pharaoh was not the title of the rulers of one dynasty only. Kings of many dynasties which ruled over the valley of the Nile and Alexandria in succession for about four thousand years bore this title. The Pharaoh during whose reign Moses was born was also, like the Israelites, a foreigner in the country, and therefore always feared lest they should multiply and help the original inhabitants of Egypt in expelling him and his people from the land or should rebel against him (Exod. 1:9-10).

1479. Important Words:

اوردهم (bring them down). The word اورد as well as الورد (watering-place) and المورود (arrived at) are all derived from ورد. They say ورده i.e. he (a man or a camel, etc.) came to it, or arrived at it, namely water, whether he entered it or not. ورد عليها means, he came to or arrived at it (water, town, etc.). اورده means, he brought him to the watering-place or he simply brought him or made him come or be present at a certain place. اورده الماء means, he made him come or he brought him to the water. اورده واصدره means, he brought it and (then) took it away. ورد (*wird*) means, coming to or arriving at water, etc.; water to which one comes to drink; the time or turn of coming to water; a company of men or a number of camels or birds coming to or arriving at water; a portion or share of

100. And [a]a curse was made to follow them in this life and on the Day of Resurrection. Evil is the gift which shall be given *them*.1480

وَ اُتۡبِعُوۡا فِیۡ ہٰذِہٖ لَعۡنَۃً وَّ یَوۡمَ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ ؕ
بِئۡسَ الرِّفۡدُ الۡمَرۡفُوۡدُ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

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[a]28:43.

water; the day or turn of a fever when it attacks the patient intermittently or periodically; a portion of the night in which a man has to pray; a section or division of the Quran portioned out for recitation at a certain time. مورود is the passive participle from ورد (*warada*) and means a place or person arrived at or visited. وارد which is the active participle means, he who comes or arrives at a place (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that all that Pharaoh did for his people was to bring them to the verge of Hell and cause them to fall into it. As shown under Important Words, the word اورد (will bring down) is generally used with reference to water but here it has been used in connection with fire in order to point out that instead of obtaining water, which is the source of physical and spiritual life (21:31), these people will land in fire, which is the killer of life. Thus their own efforts which were employed to destroy rather than get spiritual life will appear to them in an embodied form.

The expression may also contain an allusion to the fact that the descent of the people of Pharaoh into Hell will be like the repairing of a thirsty man to a place of water, i.e. corrupt as they are, it will prove the means of satisfying their peculiar thirst. The fire will purify them of their sins and thus, through it, they will at last succeed in satisfying their spiritual thirst.

1480. Important Words:

رفد (gift) and المرفود (which will be given them) are both derived from رفد (*rafada*). They say رفده i.e. he gave him, or he gave him a gift; he aided, helped or assisted him; he aided or assisted him by a gift or by a good saying or by some other thing. رفد الحائط means, he propped up or supported the wall. رفد means, a gift or a gratuity; aid, help or assistance by a gift, etc.; a lot, share or portion. رافد means, giver of a gift; aider or helper. مرفود which is the passive participle from this root, means, he who is given a gift, etc.; or that which is given as a gift, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word لعنة (curse) is not used here as a term of abuse, but in its original sense of "driving away" or "casting away by way of punishment" (Mufradāt). The verse would therefore mean that, as these people remained away from God in the present life, so, as a punishment, they will be kept away from Him in the

101. [a]That is of the tidings of the *ruined* cities, We relate it to thee. Of them *some* are standing and *some* have been mown down *like the harvest.*[1481]

ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡقُرٰی نَقُصُّہٗ عَلَیۡکَ مِنۡہَا قَآئِمٌ وَّ حَصِیۡدٌ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

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[a] 20:100.

life to come. The moral of the verse is that by following in the footsteps of a wicked man, one is disgraced both in this life and the next.

The word رفد (lit. gift or support or aid) may also refer to Pharaoh. In this case the verse would mean that Pharaoh whom his people took as their means of support against God proved an evil support for them; for he not only landed them into Hell, but himself went into the Fire with them.

1481. Important Words:

قرى (cities) is the plural of قرية and means, (1) the people of the towns; or (2) the towns themselves (Aqrab).

حصيد (mown down like the harvest) is derived from حصد. They say حصد الزرع i.e. he reaped or cut the harvest with a scythe. حصد القوم بالسيف means, he mowed down the people with the sword. The proverb من زرع الشر حصد الندامة means, he who sows evil reaps remorse. حصيد means, reaped seed-produce; mown down with the sword like reaped seed-produce; an harvest that is cut or mown down; also the lower part of the harvest which remains after the latter is cut down (Lane & Aqrab). See also 6:142.

Commentary:

In the first mentioned sense of the word قرى the word قائم (standing) would mean that the progeny of these peoples lived after them and thus, as it were, continued to stand; and in the latter sense it would mean that the remains of some of these towns are still to be found while others have become totally extinct. Similarly, in this sense the word حصيد (mown down like the harvest) would mean "a people who have become totally or nearly extinct." If, however, the word قرى is taken in the sense of "towns," the word حصيد would signify, "towns whose traces have become wholly or nearly extinct."

The verse means that the remains of some of the towns mentioned are still extant, while others have become wholly or nearly obliterated. Consequently, if the ruins of some of the towns mentioned in this *Sūrah* cannot be found, the truth of the Quranic narratives cannot be called into question, because the Quran itself uses the word حصيد (mown down) with regard to them. If, however, in some future time, archaeologists succeed in discovering the ruins of some towns now extinct, the Quranic account would still be beyond doubt, for the word حصيد (mown down) is also used with regard to a harvest that has been cut down with a scythe, the lower part of which still remains visible. See also 10:25.

102. And [a]We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves; and their gods on whom they called beside Allah were of no avail to them at all when the command of thy Lord came; and they added to them naught but perdition.1482

وَمَا ظَلَمۡنٰهُمۡ وَلٰكِنۡ ظَلَمُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ
فَمَاۤ اَغۡنَتۡ عَنۡهُمۡ اٰلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِیۡ یَدۡعُوۡنَ
مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ لَّمَّا جَآءَ اَمۡرُ
رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا زَادُوۡهُمۡ غَیۡرَ تَتۡبِیۡبٍ ﴿۱۰۲﴾

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[a] 3:118; 16:34.

1482. Commentary:

The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the fact that God never punishes a people unjustly and that it is their own misdeeds that bring down punishment upon them. It denies the theory of predestination or of man's being the victim of a blind fate. It also contradicts the view that God makes nations rise and fall arbitrarily, without just or real cause. This is why, wherever the Quran speaks of punishment, it does not fail to add that punishments or rewards are the results of men's own doing. This is what is hinted at in the words, *And We did not wrong them but they wronged themselves.*

The verse also points out that of all things it is their idols that are of absolutely no use to idolaters. All other things in nature such as fire, snakes, poisons, etc. have their uses. The swords of disbelievers were also of some service to them, because with them they killed some Muslims, but what proved of entirely no use to the idolaters were their gods, upon whom they had staked their whole future.

The words, *and they added to them naught but perdition,* do not contradict the well-known Quranic dictum that idols can do disbelievers neither good nor evil, for where the Quran denies that idols can do harm, it is intentional harm that is meant; but where it says that idols do serious harm to their votaries, as in the present verse, it means involuntary or unintentional harm, for what greater sin there can be than committing *shirk*, (idol-worship) of which idols are the unconscious cause.

The words "but perdition" also point to the moral that *shirk* generally renders idolaters lax in their efforts to better their condition and thus is indirectly instrumental in bringing about their eventual destruction. When at the Fall of Mecca, some of the idolaters who, on account of their most atrocious crimes against Muslims were proscribed from the general amnesty, took shelter in the Ka'bah, thinking that the idols therein would protect them, they were ordered by the Holy Prophet to be slain. Had they known that their idols could render them no help whatsoever, they would have sought safety in flight. Thus the words "but

103. [a]Such is the grasp of thy Lord when He seizes the cities while they are doing wrong. Surely, His grasp is grievous *and* severe.**1483**

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَخْذُ رَبِّكَ اِذَآ اَخَذَ الْقُرٰى
وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ۭ اِنَّ اَخْذَهٗٓ اَلِيْمٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿۱۰۳﴾

104. [b]In that surely is a Sign for him who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a day for which *all* mankind shall be gathered together and that is a day *the proceedings of* which shall be witnessed *by all.***1484**

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ
الْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوْعٌ ۙ لَّهُ
النَّاسُ وَذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُوْدٌ ﴿۱۰۴﴾

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[a]54:43; 85:13. [b]14:15.

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perdition" hint that شرك (idol-worship) renders its votaries lax and negligent.

1483. Commentary:

This verse gives the reason why all the foregoing events—the destruction of the people of Noah down to Moses have been related. The reason is that when the punishment of God overtakes a people, they are simply annihilated. The enemies of the Holy Prophet are told by implication that they should take warning from the fate of the opponents of former Prophets.

The word ظالمة (doing wrong) is used here in the sense of مشركة (those who associate gods with God). The word ظلم (wrong) has been used in the sense of شرك (idol-worship) at several places in the Quran. What is meant to be conveyed here is that the punishment which overtakes a people when they become idolaters and lose faith in the Unity of God is most destructive and generally extirpatory, while the ruin which comes upon a people from natural causes is gradual.

1484. Commentary:

The word "sign" is not used here in the sense of "proof" of the Day of Judgement but in the sense of "a lesson." The verse thus means that those who believe in the punishment of the future life can alone learn a lesson from the events related above. When such people witness heavenly visitations in this life, they are naturally reminded of the punishment of the life to come and, being actuated by Divine fear, they begin to strive more earnestly for the future life.

The words, *for which all mankind shall be gathered together*, signify that a day fixed for holding judgement is necessary for the moral and spiritual development and perfection of man. It is not therefore a means to an end but an end in itself. The assembling of men on that day is not accidental. It is deliberate and

105. And We delay it not save for a computed term.[1485]

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهٗۤ اِلَّا لِاَجَلٍ مَّعۡدُوۡدٍ ؕ ﴿۱۰۵﴾

106. [a]The day it comes, no soul shall speak except by His permission; then some of them will prove unfortunate and others fortunate.[1486]

يَوۡمَ يَاۡتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفۡسٌ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِهٖ ۚ فَمِنۡهُمۡ شَقِىٌّ وَّسَعِيۡدٌ ﴿۱۰۶﴾

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[a] 78:39.

serves a definite and useful purpose.

In fact, as it appears from the Quran, human actions are not quite independent, but are influenced by environment and heredity; and, in order to judge a particular action rightly, it is necessary to take into consideration all the conditions and circumstances which lead to and influence it. So, for the full realization of the true nature of a man's actions and to show that the seemingly unfair and inexplicable discrimination in dealing out different punishments and rewards to different persons is not capricious and arbitrary but perfectly just and fair, being based on the extent to which the individual is independent and free in his actions, it is necessary that there should be fixed a certain day when all men should assemble with all the conditions and circumstances under which they worked and the various causes and reasons that led to their actions, so that these circumstances and causes may be jointly considered while determining the nature of their rewards and punishments. Thus it may become apparent to all that no injustice or unfairness was observed in meting out those punishments and rewards.

1485. Commentary:

اجل (term) which means both a period and the end of a period, is of two kinds: (a) that which can be averted and (b) that which cannot be averted. The "term" that can be averted moves within a known circle which it cannot overstep; within its circle, however, this "term" is liable to change according to circumstances. For instance, the age of a man has certain limits; it can decrease or increase within those limits; but it cannot go beyond them. But the "term" which cannot be averted concerns the destruction of the world. This term is fixed and irrevocable.

1486. Important Words:

شقى (unfortunate) means, unprosperous, unfortunate, unhappy or miserable; or in a state of straitness, distress, adversity or difficulty. According to Ar-Rāghib شقاوة (unprosperousness, etc.) is of two kinds: (a) اخروية i.e. that relating to the world to come, and (b) دنيوية i.e. that relating to the present world; and the latter is of three kinds: (1) نفسية i.e. relating to the soul; (2) بدنية i.e. relating to the body and (3) خارجية i.e. relating to external circumstances (Lane).

107. As for those who will prove unfortunate, [a]they shall be in the Fire, wherein there shall be for them sighing and sobbing,**1487**

فَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ شَقُوْا فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّ شَهِيْقٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾

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[a] 21:101.

سعيد (fortunate) means, prosperous, fortunate, happy or in a state of felicity. Ar-Rāghib also divides سعادة (prosperity, etc.) as he describes شقاوة for which see note on شقي above (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse signifies that the day referred to in v. 104 above is the Day of Retribution when judgement will be set up and none will dare speak in his defence except by the command of God, because on that awful day everyone will have fully realized that any pleading or protesting before the Omniscient God is useless. But God, out of His great mercy, will Himself ask the guilty to adduce excuses calculated to mitigate their own offences or the offences of their companions and to bring their virtuous deeds into greater relief. This will result in clearer classification of the wicked and the virtuous.

1487. Important Words:

زفير (sighing) is the noun-infinitive from زفر which means, he drew in his breath vehemently, so that his ribs became pushed out; or he drew in his breath to the utmost by reason of distress; or he sent forth his breath with a prolonged sound; he sighed or uttered a long sigh or sighed vehemently; or he groaned; or he breathed, raising his voice like one moaning or in grief. They say زفرت النار i.e. the fire made a sound by its burning or its fierce burning. زفر الحمار means, the ass brayed. زفير means, the sound of drawing in of breath by reason of distress; sighing; beginning of the cry of an ass; the sound of burning fire (Lane & Aqrab).

شهيق (sobbing) is derived from شهق which means, it rose high or became high or elevated or lofty; or he (an ass) uttered the ending of his braying or the final sounds thereof. They say شهق الرجل i.e. the sound of weeping became reiterated in his chest. شهق الحمار means, the ass uttered the ending of his braying or the final sound thereof; the ass brayed. شهيق signifies, the ending or final part of the crying or braying of an ass, whereas زفير signifies the beginning thereof. شهيق also signifies a high-sounding moaning; a cry of distress (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

By using about disbelievers the words زفير and شهيق which are particularly used for the braying of an ass, the verse compares them to this timid and stupid animal. A big load of books carried on the back of an ass, says the Quran (62:6), does not make

108. [a]Abiding therein, so long as the heavens and the earth endure, excepting what thy Lord may will. Surely, thy Lord does bring about what He pleases.[1488]

خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالۡاَرۡضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيۡدُ ﴿۱۰۸﴾

109. [b]But as for those who will prove fortunate, they shall be in Heaven; abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, excepting what thy Lord may will—a gift that shall not be cut off.[1489]

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ سُعِدُوۡا فَفِى الۡجَـنَّةِ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالۡاَرۡضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ عَطَآءً غَيۡرَ مَجۡذُوۡذٍ ﴿۱۰۹﴾

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[a]78:24. [b]15:49.

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him learned. So do those who are indifferent to truth remain destitute of true knowledge and spirituality even if they are crammed with book lore. Similarly, like an ass which, according to the Quran, is a timid animal (74:51, 52), disbelievers have not the courage of their conviction. They fail to accept the truth either because they refuse to derive any benefit from God-given knowledge or because they have not the courage to accept what they believe to be the truth. The words زفير and شهيق also signify sighing and moaning by reason of distress.

1488. Commentary:

See next verse.

1489. Important Words:

غير مجذوذ (that shall not be cut off). مجذوذ is derived from جذ. They say جذه i.e. he cut it off; or he cut it off utterly; or he cut it off utterly and quickly; or he cut it repeatedly or in many pieces; he broke it. غير مجذوذ means, (a gift, etc.) not cut short or not interrupted i.e. continuous and everlasting (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The present verse and that which precedes it throw light on an important question in which Islam differs from other religions, viz. the question of salvation.

According to the Hindu religion, both Heaven and Hell (i.e. reward and punishment) possess a limited duration; and man, after undergoing the punishment, or reaping the reward, of his deeds, is sent back to this world. Although some Hindu sects disagree among themselves regarding certain details, they are all agreed on the fundamental principle that both the punishments and rewards of the next world are temporary. Of the Semitic religions, Judaism denies Paradise to all non-Jews while Jews are regarded as almost free from the torture of Hell, for, according to Judaism, no Jew will remain in Hell for more than 11 months, whereas non-Jews will abide in it forever. According to Christians, both Heaven and Hell are eternal, although some of their sects hold the belief that Heaven will at last come to an end (Tafsīr-e-Kabīr). Islam, however, fundamentally differs from all these religions. The great leaders of Muslim religious thought in the past have generally believed and Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, in our own age has particularly insisted that Heaven is eternal and everlasting, while Hell is temporary and of limited duration. The sayings of the Holy Prophet support this view. For instance, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal quotes a saying of the Holy Prophet, as reported by ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ to the effect:

لياتين على جهنم يوم تصفق فيه ابوابها ليس
فيه احد و ذلك بعد ما يلبثون فيها احقابا

i.e. "There will come on Hell a day when its shutters will strike against each other and there will be none in it. That will happen after the inmates of Hell will have lived in it for centuries" (Musnad). Thus, according to this tradition, the word خالدين (abiding) used with regard to Hell only means "remaining for long centuries". The same view was held by Ibn Mas‘ūd and Abū Hurairah. According to Ibn Taimiyyah, ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbās, Anas and many commentators are of the same opinion.

With reference to the word خالدين (abiding) used in the Quran in connection with Hell some eminent religious authorities think that it does mean "abiding forever". They however, hold that though wicked disbelievers will deserve to be kept in Hell forever, Hell itself will one day cease to exist through God’s mercy, and when there is no Hell, there will naturally be no dwellers in it. Among the supporters of this view are Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim (Fatḥ).

The saying of the Holy Prophet quoted above on the authority of ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amr, is also reported by Abū Hurairah, which fact adds to its weight and authenticity. In another tradition Ibn Mas‘ūd says: لياتين عليها زمان تخفق ابوابها i.e. "There will certainly come upon Hell a time when its shutters will strike against each other," meaning that it will be untenanted. Jābir, Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī and ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar are also reported to have made a similar statement (Fatḥ).

Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī quotes a long ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet which clearly shows that Hell is not eternal. According to this tradition the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that on the Day of Judgement God would give permission to different high-placed persons to intercede for sinners. At last common believers also will be given permission to intercede on their behalf. At first, they will intercede for those whom they know. Then, with God’s permission, they will also intercede for other sinners who have some faith left in their hearts, until at last they will intercede even for those who have only a grain of faith in their hearts. Then only those will be left behind in Hell who had never done anything good. Then will God say: "The angels have interceded, and the Prophets and the Faithful have interceded and now it is My turn, the Most Merciful of the merciful ones." Then will God take a handful from the Fire and take out of it even those who never had done any good deed (Bukhārī & Muslim).

This ḥadīth hints that finally a time will come when everyone will be taken out of Hell, for when even those who never did any good deed are removed from the Fire, who else will remain behind? Moreover, God's handful is not a physical thing. The word implies indefinite comprehensiveness and nothing can be considered to have been left out of it. It also appears from this saying that sinners will be punished first for their sins and, when they have been washed of their sins, they will be rewarded for their good deeds which, till then, will have been kept in reserve. The verse, *whoso does good an atom's weight will see it* (99:8), also points to the same conclusion.

The different traditions quoted above show that many Companions of the Holy Prophet and their immediate successors held the view that Hell is not eternal and the Quran also supports this view. The following are some of the Quranic proofs in support of it:

(1) Though the words, *excepting what thy Lord may will,* have been used with regard to both Heaven and Hell (vv. 108 & 109), in the case of Heaven the words, *a gift that shall not be cut off,* have been specifically added in v.109 in order to show that there is no limitation upon the eternity of Heaven. In the case of Hell, on the other hand, they are followed by the clause, *Surely thy Lord does bring about what He pleases* (v. 108). These words are very emphatic and imply that the inmates of Hell must necessarily be taken out of Hell one day. If they were not to be taken out of Hell at all it was unnecessary to make the declaration so emphatic by using three words of emphasis, viz. ان (surely) ربك (thy Lord) and فعال (does bring about), the last word being the intensive form of فاعل and meaning the Great Doer of things that others cannot do.

Again, if Hell, like Heaven, was to be eternal, then its mention should also have been followed by some such words as "a punishment that shall not be cut off". It is true that as about Hell, so with regard to Heaven, it has been said that its inmates will abide in it as long as God wills, but in the case of the dwellers of Heaven it has been clearly added that God's eternal will is that they should never be deprived of this favour and that their stay in Heaven should know no end. But no such declaration has been made with regard to Hell. This differentiation is so clear that even Ibn Hajr, whose view is opposed to Ibn Taimiyyah's with regard to Hell being not eternal, has been compelled to admit that whereas with regard to the inmates of Heaven God has made known His will which is that they shall abide therein forever, with respect to the dwellers of Hell He has remained silent. But even the statement that God has remained silent with regard to the inmates of Hell is not correct, for by saying, *Surely thy Lord does bring about what He wills*, the Quran declares that in the case of the inmates of Hell God will carry out His wish which is implied in the words, *excepting what thy Lord may will*.

(2) The second evidence of the limited duration of Hell is furnished by the words الا من رحم ربك و لذالک خلقهم i.e. *except those to whom thy Lord shall show mercy and for this has He created them* (11:120). It has been admitted by eminent authorities such as Ibn ‘Abbās, Ṭā’ūs, Mujāhid, Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah, and ‘Ikrimah that the pronoun ذالک (this) in the above words refers to رحمة (mercy) meaning that God has created men in order to show mercy to them (Kathīr, Manthūr and Ṭaḥāvī). Now, if it be supposed that some men will remain in Hell forever and will never be taken out of it, then these wretched people cannot be said to have been shown any mercy.

(3) Whereas elsewhere in the Quran one meets with such expressions about Heaven as, *they will surely have a reward that will never end* (41:9; 84:26; 95:7), no such expression has been used with regard to Hell, which points to a clear distinction between the duration of the rewards of Heaven and the punishment of Hell.

(4) The Quranic expression رحمتی وسعت کل شیء i.e. *My mercy encompasses all things* (7:157), also shows that the punishment of Hell is only an intermediate condition and a transitory state and that even those whom God punishes will in the end become covered by His mercy and will be forgiven. The above expression represents God’s mercy as comprehending not only all human beings, but also all other things. The same idea is expressed in 40:8, where it is said that God comprehends all things in His mercy and knowledge. If it be supposed that certain persons can remain out of the mercy of God by being subjected to everlasting punishment, it will have to be admitted that certain things can also escape the knowledge of God, for knowledge and mercy have been mentioned in the verse side by side. But it is absurd to suppose that anything can escape the knowledge of God; therefore it is equally absurd to believe that any thing will remain permanently deprived of God’s mercy.

It should, however, be remembered that temporary punishment is not inconsistent with Divine mercy. The very fact that punishment is to last for a limited period shows that it will be reformatory; and it is clear that punishment which is meant to be reformatory is only a manifestation of Divine mercy, from which no human being can remain deprived even for a single moment. This is contradictory to the belief in the eternity of Hell.

(5) The following verses of the Quran also support this view: *I have created the jinn and men only that*

110. So be not in doubt concerning that which these *people* worship. They only worship as their fathers worshipped before, and We shall surely pay them in full their portion undiminished.[1490]

فَلَاتَكُ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ
مَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ
مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَاِنَّا لَمُوَفُّوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ
غَيْرَ مَنْقُوْصٍ ﴿ع ۱۱۰﴾ ع ۹ ۱۴ ۹

they may serve Me (51:57), and *Enter then among My servants and enter then My garden* (89:30, 31). Now if all men in the end are to become God's servants, for man cannot permanently be kept away from the object for which he has been created, and if all God's servants will eventually enter Heaven the falsity of the view that Hell is eternal becomes quite clear.

(6) The sixth evidence of the limited character of Hell is to be found in the verse, *Whoso does an atom's weight of good will see it* (99:8). Now a mere alleviation of punishment cannot be truly called the "seeing" of one's good works. Hence, in order that men should see their works in completion i.e. should meet with the reward of their good actions, it is necessary that they should first be punished for their evil deeds by way of reformation and should afterwards receive the reward of their good actions.

(7) The verse, *As for him whose scales are light, Hell will be his mother* (101:9,10), constitutes further strong evidence in support of the view that Hell is not eternal. In this verse Hell is compared to a mother and it is well known that the child does not remain in the mother's womb forever. It only remains there until the formation of its body and organs become complete. Similarly, those unfortunate persons who are cast into Hell will remain there until the time when the faculties which fit them for seeing the beautiful face of the Lord have become fully developed. This verse thus makes it clear that Hell is not eternal and that the word خالدین (abiding) in the verse under comment does not denote an unending time but only a long time as is also clear from the verse, *who will tarry therein for ages* (78:24).

The words, *So long as the heavens and the earth endure*, only mean "so long as the heaven and the earth of Paradise and Hell last"; so when Hell came to an end, heaven and earth will also naturally cease to exist.

1490. Commentary:

The words, *So be not in doubt concerning that which these people worship*, have two meanings: (1) Do not wonder at their worshipping gods other than Allah, i.e. do not think that it is impossible for these people to worship any other being beside God, for a man is apt to commit such folly in respect of beliefs which he inherits

R. 10.

111. And [a]We certainly gave Moses the Book, but differences were created therein; and had it not been for a word already gone forth from thy Lord, surely the matter would have been decided between them *long before*; and *now* these *people* are in a disquieting doubt concerning it.**1491**

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ؕ
وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ
بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿۱۱۱﴾

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[a] 41:46.

from his forefathers and to which he does not give his personal consideration. Taking the words in this sense, they will be understood to have been addressed to the people of the age and will be taken as speaking of the time when *shirk* (idol-worship) will have disappeared from the world and belief in the Unity of God will have prevailed everywhere. Thus the words contain a prophecy that a time will come when belief in the Unity of God will become so paramount that it will become difficult to believe that people were ever given to idolatry.

(2) Or the verse may be taken to be addressed to every reader of the Quran, who is told here not to think that those people who are associating gods with Allah will escape punishment, for they are following in the footsteps of their predecessors and when the latter were punished for their guilt, there is no reason why their successors should escape punishment. In this case the clause would read somewhat like this: "Be not in doubt concerning (the punishment of) that which these people worship."

1491. Commentary:

Towards the end of the *Sūrah* the Quran reverts to the theme with which it began and declares that God continued to send down His word in the ages so that people might benefit by it but they always failed to do so. God gave a book to Moses and that book spoke of another book (i.e. the Quran) which was to be revealed later, but people raised doubts about it and did not pause to think that their attitude would produce grave results.

The words, *Surely the matter would have been decided between them long before*, mean that so serious was their guilt that if there had not been a decree pre-ordained, that mankind had been created for spiritual progress by becoming the object of Divine mercy (7:157; 11:120; 51:57), they would have long been destroyed.

112. And surely *the works of* [a]all *these have* not yet *been requited but* thy Lord will certainly repay them in full, according to their works. He is surely well aware of all that they do.[1492]

وَإِنَّ كُلًّا لَّمَّا لَيُوَفِّيَنَّهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ
إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١٢﴾

113. [b]So stand thou upright, as thou hast been commanded, and *also* those who have turned *to God* with thee; and exceed ye not the bounds, *O believers*; *for* surely He sees what you do.[1493]

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ
وَلَا تَطْغَوْا ؕ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٣﴾

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[a]3:58; 16:97; 39:11. [b]42:16.

1492. Commentary:

There is no difference of opinion as to the meaning of the verse, but grammarians have differed as to the significance of the particle لما (not yet). Different authorities have expressed different opinions as to the use of this particle here, but the correct opinion seems to be the one expressed by Ibn Ḥājib and supported by such eminent authorities as Ibn Hishām, and Abū Ḥayyān. According to these authorities لما as used here is the particle known as *Jāzimah* in Arabic grammar, meaning "not yet" with a verb understood after it. This verb may be deduced from the context. According to Ibn Hishām, the verb understood is يوفوا اعمالهم (i.e. their works have not yet been requited), and this appears to be the most suitable interpretation. With this interpretation of the particle لما the verse would mean that although the evil works of disbelievers have not yet been requited and God is granting them respite, the day will surely come when He will repay them in full.

1493. Commentary:

This verse shows that mere outward observance of the commandments of God is not productive of good results; it must be in full accord with Divine will. The offering of the prescribed Prayers and the observance of Fasts, for instance, are not the object of religion. The real object of religion is that man should live in accordance with God's will. Unless this is done and all actions of man are actuated by a desire to please God, he cannot hope to win His favour.

The verse also shows that it was not the Holy Prophet only who was required to mould his own life in harmony with Divine will. It was also his duty to see that all those who believed in him followed his example. This dual responsibility equally lay on his Successors, even on all the Faithful who are not only themselves required to act upon Divine commandments but are expected to make others attain a high standard of spiritual progress.

The magnitude and heaviness of this responsibility is self-evident. It is tremendous both as regards its depth and vastness. It is no easy task to observe faithfully all the commandments of God and at the same time to make one's companions do the same. But the importance of this injunction becomes all the more augmented when the fact is taken into consideration that the commandments are to be acted upon in the way in which God requires, as hinted at in the words, *as thou hast been commanded.*

Another inference which can be drawn from this verse is that the Faithful are to take the Holy Prophet as their model and to follow his example. The words, *So stand thou upright as thou hast been commanded, and also those who have turned to God with thee*, mean that the Faithful are to act uprightly in the same way as the Holy Prophet is commanded to do. The high moral standard to which believers are required to rise is thus the one set up for the Holy Prophet himself. It is clear that the verse does not say that believers are to be upright in the way in which they themselves are commanded but that they have to act uprightly in the way in which the Prophet is commanded. This definitely shows that believers are to take the Holy Prophet as their exemplar and have to try to come up to his standard.

The far-reaching effect which this verse had on the Holy Prophet himself is clear from his own words. He is reported to have said: "The *Sūrah* Hūd and its sister-Sūrahs have rendered me aged before my time" (Manthūr). Abū 'Alī Sirrī is reported to have said that he once saw the Prophet in a dream and asked him whether he had really said that the *Sūrah* Hūd had made him old? The Holy Prophet replied in the affirmative, upon which Abū 'Alī further asked whether it was the stories of the Prophets and the destruction of their peoples that had aged him. The Holy Prophet said: "No, but the words, *So stand thou upright as thou hast been commanded*, have done it" (Baihaqī). The reason why this verse weighed so heavily on the Holy Prophet's mind was that it was not only his immediate followers but the generations that were to come long afterwards whose spiritual progress he was made responsible for. It was the full realization of this grave responsibility that weighed heavily on him and rendered him old prematurely. But it appears that this high sense of responsibility so pleased God that He took upon Himself the fulfilment of this responsibility and promised the Prophet that He would continue to raise from among his followers men who, by following in his footsteps, would attain nearness to Him and would reform his people in his name.

114. And incline not toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire touch you. And you will have no friends beside Allah, nor shall you be helped.1494

وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ ۙ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾

115. And [a]observe Prayer at the two ends of the day, and in the hours of the night *that are nearer the day*. Surely, good works drive away the evil ones. This is a reminder for those who would remember.1495

وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ ؕ اِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ ذِكْرٰى لِلذّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾

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[a] 17:79.

The verse also points out how necessary it is that Muslims should become organized into a homogeneous and evenly advanced community. A Muslim can easily exhort his neighbours to virtue, but he cannot convey his exhortation to Muslims scattered all over the world. It is only through a perfect organization that this supreme and stupendous task can be accomplished. By helping to maintain such an organization, a Muslim becomes part of it and a sharer in the work carried on by it in any part of the world. The Aḥmadiyya Movement is, by the grace of God, the living example of such an organization in the world today.

The injunction to see that our fellow-men should, like us, follow the right way also implies the need of the proper upbringing of our children as well as the care of future generations.

1494. Commentary:

In the previous verse we were told that we should not only reform ourselves but also our fellow-men because man is influenced by his environment, and if our surroundings are corrupt, the corruption thereof is sure to affect us sooner or later. So in the present verse we are enjoined to sever all connexion with the wicked and the unjust even though they may be our own kith and kin.

The present verse is also connected with the words, *exceed ye not the bounds*, occurring in the previous verse. In the light of the verse under comment these words do not mean that we exceed the bonds only when we have actually committed an act of injustice, but we are equally guilty of injustice if we are accessory to another man's unjust act in any way or if we defend him when he happens to commit an offence.

1495. Important Words:

طرفی النہار (two ends of the day). طرف means, the extremity or end of anything; a side; a lateral, or an outward, or adjacent part or portion of a thing; a region, district, quarter or tract; a part, portion, piece or bit of a thing. كريم الطرفين means, generous or noble in respect of both male and female ancestors. اطراف (plural of طرف) means a man’s father and mother and brothers and paternal uncles and any near relations whom it is unlawful for him to marry; noble or exalted men. اطراف الارض means, the noble or exalted men or the learned men of the earth or land. طرفى النهار means, two ends of the day i.e. morning and afternoon or the morning as well as afternoon and late afternoon (Lane & Aqrab).

زلفا من الليل (hours of the night that are nearer the day). زلفا is derived from زلف. They say زلف الشيء i.e. he did the thing previously or beforehand. ازلفه means, he made or brought or drew him or it near. They say ازلف الاشياء i.e. he collected the things together. زلفا which is the plural of زلفة means, nearness with respect to rank, degree or station; or simply rank or grade; a portion of the first part of the night, whether small or large. It also means, hours or periods of the night commencing from the daytime, and the hours or periods of the daytime commencing from the night; or hour or period joining day and night at both ends (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of the responsibilities of the Holy Prophet and those of his followers. As full acquittal of such heavy and onerous responsibilities is beyond human power, the verse under comment suggests some methods which can help a Muslim successfully to discharge them. The first method suggested is Prayer and worship of God, because one urgently needs God’s help for discharging such heavy tasks. By Prayer favourable Divine decrees come into operation.

The words, *Surely good works drive away the evil ones*, suggest effective ways by which evils can be overcome and eradicated. The setting of a good example is one of them. It wins the hearts of men and makes them copy it. In this way the emulation of good makes evil gradually disappear. It is actions and not words that can overcome evil and efface it. Very few persons follow an independent line of action. A vast majority of them only follow and imitate others. Therefore a good example is an excellent way of establishing virtue in the world.

Another method implied in these words is that we should exhort people to virtue. The proper preaching of good greatly helps men to shun evil ways.

The doing of good to people and treating them with kindness is yet another method which goes a long way to inclining the hearts of men to good works. A kindly and beneficent deed done to a person in need makes him give ear to advice. This is the third way suggested in this verse.

In addition to these methods for the preaching and propagation of good, the words, *Surely good works drive away the evil ones*, also contain a sure guidance for the spiritual progress of the workers themselves.

116. And [a]be thou steadfast; for surely Allah suffers not the reward of the righteous to perish.[1496]

وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝١١٦

117. Why, then, were there not among the generations before you persons possessed of understanding who would have forbidden corruption in the earth—except a few of those whom We saved from among them? But [b]the wrongdoers followed that by which they were afforded ease and comfort, and they became guilty.[1497]

فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اُولُوْا
بَقِيَّةٍ يَّنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ اَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ
ظَلَمُوْا مَآ اُتْرِفُوْا فِيْهِ وَكَانُوْا
مُجْرِمِيْنَ ۝١١٧

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[a]12:91. [b]13:34.

If a person desires to get rid of an evil habit, he should begin to practise a corresponding virtue. In this way he will soon get rid of his evil habit. The words also tell us that to avoid the evil consequences of our misdeeds we should practise more and more virtue. The more virtue we practise, the more secure will we become from the consequences of our evil deeds.

Incidentally, the verse also hints at the different times of Prayer prescribed for the Faithful. They are deducible from the words طرفي النهار (two ends of the day) and زلفا من الليل (hours of the night that are nearer the day).

1496. Commentary:

This verse tells us another great secret of individual and national success. This consists in constancy and steadfastness, which are essential conditions for success.

1497. Important Words:

اولوا بقية (persons possessed of understanding). بقية it is derived from بقي which means, he or it remained, lasted, endured and was or became permanent or perpetual. They say بقي من الشيء بقية i.e. a remnant, relic or residue of the thing retained. The Arabs say فلان من بقية القوم i.e. such a one is of the best of people, for it is the best that lasts. اولوا بقية means, persons possessed of excellence, or persons possessing a relic of judgement and intelligence, or persons of understanding and discrimination, or persons possessing a quality of watching or observing and, hence, of guarding and preserving (Lane & Aqrab). See also 11:87.

118. And [a]thy Lord is not the One Who would destroy the cities unjustly while the people thereof were righteous.1498

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَّأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾

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[a] 6:132; 20:135; 26:209; 28:60.

اترفوا (they were afforded ease and comfort) is derived from ترف which means, he enjoyed or led a plentiful and a pleasant or an easy and delicate life; or a life of ease and plenty. They say اترفه المال i.e. wealth made him behave exorbitantly; or to be excessively disobedient or rebellious; or to exalt himself; be inordinate in infidelity; or to be extravagant in acts of disobedience and in wrongdoing. اترف الرجل means, the man persisted in, resolved upon, transgression, wrongdoing and deviation from the right way (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse makes a fleeting reference to a serious but general mistake. It purports to say that, when experience had shown that man has a tendency to become corrupt, why did not the wise men among past generations recognize this responsibility about their own people and at the outset warn them of the evil consequences of their bad deeds and thus nip the evil in the bud. But instead of doing this they allowed the evil to grow, with the result that their people became totally corrupt and depraved. These people, instead of learning a lesson from the fate of their predecessors, lost themselves in pursuit of the paltry things of the world and the result was that they ranged themselves with wrongdoers and became estranged from God.

1498. Commentary:

The verse clearly shows that it is unjust to punish any people unless they make themselves deserving of it by their misdeeds. It is a pity that in spite of the fact that various kinds of afflictions and miseries have fallen upon present-day Muslims, they persist in thinking that they are following the right path. This, in other words, means that they look upon God as unjust and themselves as righteous. The important lesson that we learn from this verse is that as punishment comes only when people become corrupt, therefore when people see signs of an impending punishment they should take a warning from it and should at once set about eschewing evil practices and reforming themselves.

As the word مصلحون (righteous) also means "making peace among themselves", the verse also shows that the way to avert Divine punishment is that people should make peace among themselves and there should be unity and concord among them. In fact, decline and degradation overtake a people only when they are rent by dissensions and discord and fall victim to various kinds of moral and spiritual maladies.

119. And [a]if thy Lord had enforced *His* will, He would have surely made mankind one people; but they would not cease to differ,[1499]

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ اُمَّةً
وَّاحِدَةً وَّلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ ۙ﴿١١٩﴾

120. Save those on whom thy Lord has had mercy, and for this has He created them. [b]But the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: 'Verily, I will fill Hell with *the disobedient* jinn and men all together.'[1500]

اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ؕ وَ لِذٰلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ؕ
وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَاَمْلَـَٔنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

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[a] 2:214; 10:20; 42:9. [b] 15:44; 32:14; 38:85-86.

1499. Commentary:

See 2:214 & 10:20.

1500. Commentary:

The words, *for this has He created them*, mean that it is for mercy that God has created men. This interpretation is supported by 7:157.

The words, *the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled*, show that it is only the followers of Satan and evildoers that will be cast into Hell. The verse does not at all mean that all men will be thrown into Hell. In the words, *the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled*, God mentions a promise, so the verse must be interpreted in harmony with that promise. But no promise is to be found in the Quran to the effect that all men will be cast into Hell. On the contrary, there is a definite promise in which it is said that Hell will be filled with those who follow Satan (7:19). It is to this promise that the verse under comment refers, for the Quran makes mention of no other promise except this.

So the verse means only that those who follow Satan will be thrown into Hell.

It was stated in the previous clause that God had created man for mercy. Now the question naturally arose, if man had been created for mercy, why were men to be cast into Hell? The present verse answers this question by saying that it is true that man has been created for mercy, but it was also declared that this promise of mercy would not be fulfilled immediately with regard to people who followed Satan. These companions of Satan will first be thrown into Hell on account of their affinity with him, and after they have been purged of their sins, they will go to Heaven. Moreover, the preceding verse speaks of disbelievers "who would not cease to differ". So the jinn and men spoken of here are none but the wicked among them. For a discussion of the jinn see 15:28.

121. And [a]all of the tidings of the Messengers, whereby We make thy heart firm, We relate unto thee. And herein has come to thee the truth and an exhortation and a reminder for believers.**1501**

وَكُلًّا نَّقُصُّ عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا
نُثَبِّتُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ ۚ وَجَآءَكَ فِیۡ هٰذِهِ
الۡحَقُّ وَمَوۡعِظَةٌ وَّذِكۡرٰی لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾

122. And [b]say to those who believe not: ‘Act as best you can, we *too* are acting.**1502**

وَقُلۡ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ اعۡمَلُوۡا عَلٰی
مَكَانَتِكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّا عٰمِلُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۲۲﴾

123. And [c]wait ye, we *too* are waiting.’**1503**

وَانۡتَظِرُوۡا ۚ اِنَّا مُنۡتَظِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾

124. And [d]to Allah belongs the hidden things of the heavens

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيۡبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَاِلَيۡهِ

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[a]25:33. [b]6:136; 11:94; 39:40. [c]10:103; 32:31. [d]16:78; 27:66; 35:39; 49:19.

1501. Commentary:

This verse clearly proves that the accounts of the previous Prophets have not been narrated in the Quran merely as simple facts of history, but contain prophetic allusions to similar incidents that were to occur in the life of the Holy Prophet. If it had not been so, how could these accounts be said to bring satisfaction to his mind and "make his heart firm." It was only when these accounts were to be taken as future incidents of his own life, that they could bring satisfaction to the Holy Prophet. In these accounts he saw how his enemies were to behave towards him, how they were to be discomfited and how his cause was to triumph in the end. As he was the representative of all previous Prophets, therefore, more or less, he was to pass through all the experiences through which his predecessors in the prophetic office had passed.

1502. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to disbelievers that bootless quarrelling and fighting serves no useful purpose. Time will show who is in the right and who in the wrong by the results that the actions of Muslims and their opponents produce.

1503. Commentary:

The verse hints that it is believers who, being the aggrieved party, have reason to show impatience and demand the speedy arrival of Divine punishment and not disbelievers; but actually it is the latter who are getting impatient.

and the earth, and to Him shall the whole affair be referred. So worship Him and put thy trust in Him *alone*. And thy Lord is not unmindful of what you do.[1504]

يُرْجَعُ الْاَمْرُ كُلُّهٗ فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ ع ١٠ ١٤ ١٠

1504. Commentary:

This verse with which the present *Sūrah* concludes means to say that though the great prophecies made in this *Sūrah* about the ultimate triumph of Islam and the discomfiture of disbelievers appear to be incredible and impossible of fulfilment at the present time, yet nothing is impossible with God and these prophecies will surely soon come to pass.

In the words, "worship Him", believers are reminded that although the word of God has foretold the final triumph of Islam, yet they should remember that God is a jealous God and their failings and shortcomings may defer and postpone the fulfilment of these promises. Therefore they should engage themselves in the worship of God and in prayer and at the same time have full trust in His promises.

CHAPTER 12

YŪSUF

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to most Companions of the Holy Prophet, the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca; but, according to Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatāda, verses 2 to 4 were revealed after Hijrah.

As already pointed out, chapter 10 (*Sūrah* Yūnus) deals with both aspects of God's dealings with man—His punishment and mercy. But while chapter 11 (*Sūrah* Hūd) deals with the subject of Divine punishment, the present chapter deals with that of Divine mercy. The *Sūrah* dealing with God's punishment has been placed before that dealing with His mercy because the enemies of the Holy Prophet were shown mercy after they had been punished for their misdeeds.

Subject Matter

The present *Sūrah*, however, possesses one peculiarity. The whole of it deals with the life story of only one Prophet—Joseph. In this it differs from any other *Sūrah*. The reason for this peculiarity is that the life of the Prophet Joseph bears a close resemblance to that of the Holy Prophet even in minor details. The entire *Sūrah* has been devoted to a somewhat detailed account of the Prophet Joseph's life that it might serve as a forewarning of the incidents that were to occur during the life-time of the Holy Prophet.

In chapter 10 the story of the Prophet Jonah was chosen as an illustration of Divine mercy, while in the detailed account given in the present chapter the example of Joseph has been cited as an illustration. Two reasons may be given for this: (1) The lives of Jonah and the Holy Prophet resemble one another only in their closing stages, there being little resemblance between them in the intervening stages. But Joseph's life, as already stated, resembles that of the Holy Prophet even in small details. (2) Although the case of Jonah resembles that of the Holy Prophet inasmuch as the peoples of both Jonah and the Holy Prophet were ultimately saved through God's mercy, the resemblance between the two is only partial whereas the resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet even in the way in which God treated the former's brethren and the latter's tribe is very close and is almost complete. The mercy shown to Jonah's people was directly the result of God's grace, Jonah having no hand in it, while the declaration of pardon for Joseph's brethren was made by Joseph himself, and so it happened with the Quraish of Mecca that the announcement of their unqualified forgiveness came directly from the Holy Prophet's himself.

رکوعاتها ۱۲ سُوۡرَةُ یُوۡسُفَ مَکِّیَّۃٌ ۱۲ اٰیاتها ۱۱۲

(**YŪSUF**)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.**1505**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ①

2. [b]Alif Lām Rā. [c]These are verses of the clear Book.**1506**

الٓرٰ ۟ قف تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ ② قف

3. [d]We have revealed it—the Quran in Arabic—that you may understand.**1507**

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ قُرۡءٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لَّعَلَّکُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ③

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[a]1:1. [b]10:2; 11:2; 13:2; 14:2; 15:2. [c]15:2; 26:3; 27:2; 28:3. [d]42:8; 43:4; 46:13.

1505. Commentary:

See 1:1.

1506. Commentary:

In the words *Alif Lām Rā* i.e. I am Allah, the All-Seeing, the disbelievers have been called upon to make use of their power of observation, hence the reference to the Divine attribute of "Seeing." The *Sūrah* tells disbelievers that the Holy Prophet bears a close resemblance to Joseph, and that it is not right for them to call him an impostor before seeing his end.

The word مبين (i.e. clear, for the full meaning of which see 2:169) signifies that the Quran not only states facts and makes predictions and lays down laws and ordinances but also supports and substantiates what it says by solid arguments and sound reasons. The word also means that the Quran is not only clear in itself but also lifts the veil of obscurity from some previous Scriptures. It also implies an answer to the objection that Quranic accounts differ from those of previous Scriptures. Being مبين which means not only "clear" but also "that which makes clear or manifest," it is one of the functions of the Quran to point out errors that have found their way into former Scriptures. It is, therefore, inevitable that it should differ from them.

The word مبين also points to the Quran being complete in itself. It needs no external evidence to demonstrate the truth of its claims but contains adequate internal proofs to substantiate them. It not only puts forth claims but also supplies proofs and arguments in support of them.

The word مبين also contains a beautiful hint that all that is essential for the attainment of nearness to God and all that relates to the laws of Sharī‘ah, to ethics, and to matters of belief has been made clear and manifest in the Quran.

1507. Important Words:

عربيا (in Arabic) is derived from عرب (*‘ariba*) or عرب (*‘aruba*). They say عربت البئر (*‘aribat*) i.e. the water of the well became abundant; or the well contained much water. عربت معدته

means, his stomach became in a corrupt or disordered state from being burdened (owing to fulness). عرب الرجل (*'aruba*) means, the man spoke clearly, plainly or distinctly after being barbarous in speech; he was or became brisk, lively or sprightly. عرب means, he spoke clearly, plainly or distinctly without incorrectness. عرب لسانه means, his tongue or speech was or became chaste Arabic, اعراب الكلام means, he spoke clearly, plainly, distinctly or intelligibly in Arabic; or he made the speech clear, plain, distinct or perspicuous; or he made his speech free from error or incorrectness. عربي means, pertaining to Arabic; clear, eloquent and chaste in speech; of established Arabic lineage. So the expression قرانا عربيا would mean, a book which is (1) most extensively and regularly read and (2) which can express its meanings in a clear, eloquent and comprehensive language (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word عرب conveys the sense of fullness, abundance and clearness, and the Arabic language is so called because its roots are innumerable and are full of meaning and because it is most expressive, eloquent and comprehensive. It possesses suitable words and phrases for the full expression of all sorts of ideas and shades of meaning. Any topic can be discussed in this language with a precision and thoroughness unmatched in any other. European scholars have had to testify to the fact that the Arabic language is complete in respect of its roots. It consists of hundreds of thousands of roots which are pregnant with a vast variety of meanings. Ibn Jinnī, an eminent linguist, has advanced the claim in the name of his teacher, Abū 'Alī, that even the letters of the Arabic language possess clear and definite meanings. For instance, he declared that the letters *Mīm, Lām* and *Kāf*, in whatever combination they may occur, express the idea of "power," which is more or less common to all the words that are formed with these letters or are derived from this root.

In the previous verse the Quran was called "the Book" which implied a prophecy that it would ever continue to be preserved in the form of a book. In the present verse it has been called "the Quran," meaning, "a book that is read," which constitutes a prophecy that it will be very widely read and studied. It is a fact which no opponent of Islam can deny that no other book is so widely and frequently read as the Quran. Professor Nöldeke says, "Since the use of the Koran in public worship, in schools and otherwise, is much more extensive than, for example, the reading of the Bible in most Christian countries it has been truly described as the most widely read book in existence" (Enc. Bri. 9th edition, vol. 16, p. 597).

Thus, the giving of these two names to the Word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet, viz. the "Book" and the "Quran" signifies that this final Law of God would be preserved both by means of the pen and the tongue.

The verse also hints that if the Quran had not been revealed in a tongue which possessed the quality of

4. We narrate unto thee the most beautiful narration by revealing to thee this Quran, though thou wast, before this, of those not possessed of *requisite* knowledge.[1508]

نَحۡنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيۡكَ اَحۡسَنَ الۡقَصَصِ بِمَاۤ
اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ ۖ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتَ
مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ لَمِنَ الۡغٰفِلِيۡنَ ④

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expressing all ideas with perfect ease and clearness, as the Arabic language does, or if it had not been widely and constantly read (as the Quran is, in accordance with the prophecy implied in its name), people would not have benefited by it as much as they have done and still do.

It may also be incidentally noted here that Arabic, as its very name implies, is the mother of all languages (ام الالسنة). This great revelation was made and emphasized by Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, who wrote a treatise on this subject entitled, "*Minan-ur-Raḥmān*". See also 14:5.

1508. Important Words:

نقص (We narrate). They say قص اثره i.e. he followed his tracks or footsteps in pursuit. قص عليه الحديث means, he related to him the story in its proper manner i.e. rightly, as though he followed its traces in pursuit and related it accordingly (Lane). See also 7:177.

Commentary:

As the expression نقص (which literally means, we narrate rightly or properly) indicates, the verse shows that some differences existed about the life story of Joseph. The Quran here claims to act as judge between the upholders of different views and to lift the veil of obscurity from the face of the true story. This is why it says, We relate to thee the narration rightly or properly as though following its very traces (see Important Words). It is strange that some European critics of the Quran have not taken into consideration the existence of differences about the life of Joseph, but have only thought fit to take exception to the narrative of the Quran, merely because it differs from that of the Bible in certain details. In fact, the very objection has established the truth of the Quran, inasmuch as the claim that it relates the incidents rightly shows that the Revealer of the Quran knew that at some future time people would object to the Quranic version. Brinckman is one of these critics. In his "Notes on Islam" he says, "In the Koran a beautiful and touching tale is mangled and spoiled." The following pages will show whether it is in the Quran or the Bible, that a "beautiful and touching tale" has been "mangled and spoiled."

One of the reasons why the story of Joseph was revealed to the Holy Prophet in such detail is that it contains many prophetic allusions to his own life. The whole story was to be, as it were, re-enacted in the person of the Holy Prophet himself and his brethren, the Quraish, and

5. *Remember the time* [a]when Joseph said to his father, ‘O my father, I saw *in a dream* eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them making obeisance to me.’**1509**

اِذْ قَالَ يُوْسُفُ لِاَبِيْهِ يٰۤاَبَتِ اِنِّيْ رَاَيْتُ
اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَّ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ
رَاَيْتُهُمْ لِيْ سٰجِدِيْنَ۝

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[a] 12:101.

was thus to serve as evidence of his truth. Another reason is that, as the Holy Prophet was the like of Joseph it was necessary that he himself should know the latter’s life history.

The Holy Prophet has been referred to here as *of those not possessed of requisite knowledge*. His lack of requisite knowledge about Joseph was intended to hint that, firstly, the whole truth about Joseph was to be found neither in the Bible nor in the Talmud; and, secondly, that the Holy Prophet was not aware that events similar to those which happened to Joseph were to occur in his own life. The account of the Quran differs from that of the Bible in many respects but, as will appear from the following pages, wherever the two accounts differ, it is the Bible that has erred.

1509. Important Words:

يوسف (Joseph) was the eleventh son of the Prophet Jacob, otherwise known as Israel, and the elder of the two sons of Rachel. The meaning given to the name is "shall add" i.e. "The Lord shall add to me another son" (Gen. 30:24). A somewhat detailed account of his life is given in the present *Sūrah*. It should, however, be added that Joseph possesses the unique characteristic among all Prophets of God that not only was he himself a Prophet of God but his father, Jacob, his grandfather, Isaac, and his great-grandfather, Abraham, were all God’s chosen Messengers. The Holy Prophet referred to this characteristic of Joseph in one of his well-known sayings when, on being asked by some of his Companions as to who was the noblest of men, he is reported to have replied, "Truly the noblest of men is the Prophet Joseph who was the son, grandson and great-grandson of a Prophet of God" (Bukhārī, *Kitāb Bad’ul-Khalq*). It may also be noted here that, though Joseph was buried in Egypt, his remains were later removed by Moses to Palestine when the Israelites were commanded by God to leave Egypt (Enc. Bib.).

كوكبا (stars) is derived from كوكب (*kaukaba*) which means, it (iron) glistened; was lustrous, or bright. كوكب (*kaukabun*) of which the plural is كواكب means, a star; an asterism; a constellation; the source or spring of a well; the lustre or brightness of iron, etc.; a sword; a whiteness in the eye; a tract which differs in colour from the land in which it lies; a youth nearly of the age of puberty; also a youth who has attained the period of adolescence and whose face has become beautiful; the chief or lord, or prince and horseman, or cavalier of a people; an armed man; a mountain; a troop of horses; the greater or chief part of a thing; the flower or flowers of a garden, etc. (Lane).

Commentary:

With this verse begins the story of Joseph, and in this very verse two important differences in the accounts of the Bible and the Quran and in the manner of their narration have been brought to light. Firstly, the Biblical account begins with a description of the pedigree of Joseph, while the Quran leaves this unimportant detail to be filled up by historians and begins the actual narration with the dream of Joseph, which constitutes its pivot. The whole life of Joseph revolves round this dream. Thus the Quran has opened the narrative with a much better and more appropriate beginning than the Bible. Secondly, while describing the dream of Joseph, the Bible mentions the sun and the moon first and the eleven stars afterwards, as making obeisance to Joseph (Gen. 37:9), but the Quran reverses the order; and actual facts of history support the order followed by the Quran, for it was the brethren of Joseph (the eleven stars) who met him first and made obeisance to him and his parents came afterwards. The vision as given in the Quran was literally fulfilled in actual life.

The word ساجدین (making obeisance) in the verse does not mean that the brothers and parents of Joseph actually fell prostrate before him. The root-meaning of this word being "obedience" and "submission" (for which see 2:35), the expression signified only that they would become obedient to the authority of Joseph and so it actually came to pass, for the parents and brothers of Joseph came to reside in the land where Joseph held sway as a Minister of State. Thus it was that they became ساجد or obedient to him. The names of the eleven brothers of Joseph, as given in the Bible, are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

The incident of the vision related by Joseph to his father furnishes two points of resemblance between him and the Holy Prophet. Just as Joseph's vision, which was his first revelation, foretold his future greatness; so the first revelation of the Holy Prophet in the Cave of Ḥirā predicted that he was to become the most honoured man of the human race. In 96:2-5, containing the first revelation which the Holy Prophet received, he was told that God would make him the most honoured among mankind and through him would teach men things which they did not know before, and that he would be the most honoured man not only among his contemporaries but also among those who had gone before him as well as those who would come after him. In this way, he would not only be the chief among his own brethren or followers, but also among his spiritual forefathers, the Prophets of yore. This is why the Holy Prophet is reported to have said لوکان موسی و عیسی

6. He said, ‘O my darling son, relate not thy dream to thy brothers, lest they contrive a plot against thee; [a]for Satan is to man an open enemy.[1510]

قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلٰٓى
اِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيْدُوْا لَكَ كَيْدًا ؕ اِنَّ
الشَّيْطٰنَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝٦

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[a] 2:169; 18:51; 35:7.

حيين لما وسعهما الااتباعى i.e. even if Moses and Jesus had been living, they could not have helped tendering their allegiance to me (Kathīr. vol. 2, p. 246). He also said انا سيد ولد آدم i.e. I am the chief of all the children of Adam (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Manāqib*).

The second point of resemblance between the Holy Prophet and Joseph mentioned in this verse is that, whereas Joseph related his vision to his father, the Holy Prophet, at the instance of his wife, Khadījah, related his first revelation to Waraqah bin Naufal, who was one of the elders of the family (Bukhārī).

1510. Important Words

رؤيا (dream) is derived from رأى which means, (1) he saw with the eye; (2) he saw mentally; (3) he saw in a dream or vision; (4) he held the opinion; (5) he thought or considered, etc. The Arabs say رأيته رأى العين i.e. I saw him where the eye or sight fell upon him, i.e. I saw him actually with the eye. رؤيا means, a dream or vision seen in sleep. According to most lexicologists رؤيا is synonymous with حلم (*ḥulm*) but according to others the former is such as is good and the latter is the contrary (Lane).

Commentary:

Here again the Quran differs from the Bible and again the Quranic version is decidedly more reasonable and correct. According to the Quran, Joseph told his dream to his father first, while according to the Bible he first related it to his brothers (Gen. 37:9). But the Bible itself says that Joseph had seen another dream, even before this dream which the Quran relates and, on listening to this first dream, his brethren had said to him: "Shalt thou indeed reign over us or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words (Gen. 37:5-8). Now, after the rebuke he had received from his brothers on telling them his first dream, it is highly unreasonable and improbable that Joseph should have related his second and similar dream to them before acquainting his father with it. So the Quranic account is clearly nearer truth and reason than the Biblical account.

The Quran represents Jacob, the father of Joseph, as having forbidden him to mention his dream to his brethren. It also gives the reason why he forbade him to do so. The reason was that the dream would excite their envy and they would be tempted to plot against him. That this fear of Jacob was only too well-founded is borne out by the Bible itself, for it says that Joseph’s brethren hated him

7. ‘And thus *shall it be as thou hast seen*, thy Lord will choose thee and [a]teach thee the interpretation of things and perfect His favour upon thee and upon the family of Jacob as He perfected it upon two of thy forefathers—Abraham and Isaac. Verily, thy Lord is All-Knowing, Wise.’**1511**

وَكَذٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيْكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ
تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ
وَعَلٰۤى اٰلِ يَعْقُوْبَ كَمَاۤ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰۤى اَبَوَيْكَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ
عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۷ ع ۱ ۷ ۱۱

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[a] 12:22, 102.

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yet the more for his dreams. This also goes to support the Quranic version.

The verse under comment mentions another important resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Jacob, on hearing the dream of Joseph, told him that when his brothers heard of it, they would plot against him and seek to do him harm, similarly, when Waraqah bin Naufal heard of the first revelation from the Holy Prophet, he told him that a time would come when his people would plot against him and turn him out of their town.

1511. Important Words:

يعقوب (Jacob) may, be said to have been derived from عقب. They say عقبه i.e. he struck his heel; he came after him as though at his heel. The Bible says, "And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel; and his name was called Jacob," (Gen. 25:26) as if "one who takes hold by the heel." The name is also explained in the Bible as "the supplanter" (Gen. 27:36). It is the prevalent critical opinion that Ya‘ākob (Jacob) is really a shortened form of Ya‘ākob-el, admitting several explanations such as "God follows" or "God rewards." Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah and the grandson of Abraham and the traditional ancestor of the people of Israel (another name of Jacob) and known as the third Patriarch (Enc. Bib. & Jew. Enc.). See also 2:41.

Commentary:

The words, *thy Lord shall choose thee*, mean that God will deal with you (Joseph) according to your dream, and you will attain to the greatness which has been promised to you in the vision.

The expression, *shall teach you the interpretation of things*, is capable of two meanings: (a) what you have seen in the dream will come to pass (b) God will teach you how to interpret dreams.

By the word "favour" occurring in this verse is meant the boon of prophethood, which means that Joseph received the promise that God would bestow prophethood on him,

R. 2.

8. Surely, in Joseph and his brethren there are Signs for the inquirers.[1512]

لَقَدۡ كَانَ فِیۡ یُوۡسُفَ وَاِخۡوَتِہٖۤ اٰیٰتٌ
لِّلسَّآئِلِیۡنَ ⑧

9. When they said, ‘Verily, Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are, although we are a strong party.

اِذۡ قَالُوۡا لَیُوۡسُفُ وَاَخُوۡہُ اَحَبُّ اِلٰۤی
اَبِیۡنَا مِنَّا وَنَحۡنُ عُصۡبَۃٌ ؕ اِنَّ اَبَانَا لَفِیۡ

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and through him He would bestow distinction on Jacob’s family also. God would make them believe in Joseph and thus they would share with him the favours and blessings of God.

This verse also embodies a divergence from the Bible. According to the Quran, Jacob was pleased to hear of the dream of Joseph and held it as true. But the Bible says: "His father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen. 37:10). Evidently there was no reason or occasion for Jacob to become angry with his son for having seen a dream in which he had no hand. No reasonable person, much less a Prophet of God, would act so unreasonably. Neither can it be said that Jacob thought Joseph was telling a lie and that really he had dreamt no dream, for the words which Jacob uttered when he heard of the dream i.e. "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed?" show that Jacob did believe that Joseph had really seen a dream. It is curious that the Bible contradicts itself in this very passage, for it says, "His brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (Gen. 37:11). The fact that Jacob "observed the saying" i.e. remembered it and bore it in mind, shows that he believed it to be a true dream and a genuine heavenly vision.

This incident furnishes a fourth point of similarity between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Jacob believed in the truth of Joseph’s dream, similarly, when Waraqah heard of the first revelation of the Holy Prophet, he accepted it as the true Word of God and even likened it to the revelation of Moses.

1512. Commentary:

By "inquirers" is here meant those who inquire about the truth of the Holy Prophet.

This verse also shows that the life history of Joseph as given in this *Sūrah* was not meant as a mere narrative, but provided solid proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet. In fact, the incidents in the life of Joseph were so many signs or prophecies which were later to be fulfilled in the life of the Holy Prophet.

[a]Surely, our father is in manifest error.[1513]

ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنِۣۖ ﴿٩﴾

10. Kill Joseph or cast him out to some *distant* land, so that your father's favour may become exclusively yours and you can thereafter become a righteous people.'[1514]

اقۡتُلُوۡا يُوۡسُفَ اَوِ اطۡرَحُوۡهُ اَرۡضًا يَّخۡلُ
لَكُمۡ وَجۡهُ اَبِيۡكُمۡ وَتَكُوۡنُوۡا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ
قَوۡمًا صٰلِحِيۡنَ ﴿١٠﴾

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[a] 12:96.

1513. Important Words:

عصبة (a strong party) is derived from عصب which means, he twisted a thing or wound it round or he folded it tightly; he bound or tied a thing. عصبة means, party or company of men who league together to defend one another, generally from ten to forty in number; a company of men absolutely. عصبية (*'aṣabiyyat*) means, zeal in the cause of one's party; a strong attachment which holds several persons closely united by the same interests or the same opinion and which causes them to defend one another; partisanship or party spirit (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse under comment contains the fifth resemblance of the Holy Prophet with Joseph. Joseph's brothers were annoyed that instead of them, who, as they thought, were superior to him in every respect, he had won the affection of their father and had become the centre of his attention. In the same way it is on record that when some Arab chiefs were asked what they thought of the Prophet's claims, they answered that if God had intended to raise a Prophet it was they who deserved this honour."

The Meccans also seemed to hold the view that the Quran ought to have been revealed to one of the great men of Mecca or Ṭā'if (43:32). They looked upon the Holy Prophet as too small a person to be selected for the exalted office of a Prophet.

1514. Commentary:

Like the brothers of Joseph, who plotted to kill him, the Quraish of Mecca also conspired to put the Holy Prophet to death (8:31). This is the sixth point of resemblance between the two Prophets. But here again the Quran differs from the Bible. According to the Quran, Joseph's brothers first held a secret conference and matured a plan to put Joseph out of their way, and then went in a body to their father asking him to send him with them, while according to the Bible, they came to a sudden decision to slay him as soon as they saw him approaching them in the fields, without previous consultation (Gen. 37:18-20). Of the two accounts the Quranic one is obviously nearer truth.

11. One of them said, 'Kill not Joseph, but if you must do something, cast him into the bottom of a deep well; some of the travellers will pick him up.'[1515]

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ لَا تَقۡتُلُوۡا يُوۡسُفَ
وَاَلۡقُوۡهُ فِيۡ غَيٰبَتِ الۡجُبِّ يَلۡتَقِطۡهُ
بَعۡضُ السَّيَّارَةِ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ فٰعِلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

Only an insane person or a hardened or habitual murderer or dacoit can take the life of an innocent person suddenly and without premeditation. The brothers of Joseph were members of a respectable family. They could not be expected to come to so atrocious a decision on the spur of the moment. Their decision to murder Joseph was the result of a mature and well-thought-out plan. Moreover, if the decision to kill Joseph was the outcome of a sudden impulse, the man who made the suggestion should have thought twice before doing so lest the others refused to accept his suggestion and he should be branded a potential murderer. Their words, *and you can thereafter become a righteous people*, also show that they were not habitual criminals and that in their heart of hearts they disliked the foul deed, though they were temporarily blinded by hatred and jealousy.

1515. Important Words:

غيابة (bottom) is derived from غاب which means, he was or became absent; or distant and remote; or hidden and concealed. غيابة or غيبة means, that part of anything which veils or conceals one; the bottom of a well; covert or place of concealment of birds; a low or depressed piece of land or ground; also a grave (Lane & Aqrab).

جب (deep well) is derived from جب (*jabba*). They say جبه i.e. he cut it; or cut it off. جب (*jubb*) means, a well; or a well not cased with stone or the like; or a well containing much water; or a deep well; or a well that people have found, not one that they have dug; or a well that is wide or ample (Lane & Aqrab).

سيارة (travellers) is derived from سار which means, he went or passed along; or he marched, journeyed or departed by night or by day. سيارة means, one who travels or journeys much; a caravan; a company of persons journeying. السيارة is the name of the five planets viz. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse embodies yet one more point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as one of the brothers of Joseph opposed the proposal to slay him and suggested instead that he should be disposed of in some other manner, so when the plot to kill the Holy Prophet was mooted and hatched at Mecca, some of the plotters objected. Similarly, when the Meccans made a compact to boycott and starve the Holy Prophet and his followers to death, some of

12. They said, ‘O our father, why dost thou not trust us with respect to Joseph, when we are certainly his sincere well-wishers?[1516]

قَالُوْا يٰۤاَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَاْمَنَّا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ
وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَنٰصِحُوْنَ ١٢

13. Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play, and we shall surely keep guard over him.’[1517]

اَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَّرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَاِنَّا
لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ١٣

14. He said, ‘It grieves me that you should take him away, and I fear lest the wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him.’[1518]

قَالَ اِنِّيْ لَيَحْزُنُنِيْۤ اَنْ تَذْهَبُوْا بِهٖ
وَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَاَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ
غٰفِلُوْنَ ١٤

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the citizens opposed this compact and finally broke it.

1516. Commentary:

This verse points to another difference with the Biblical version; for, whereas in this verse we are told that the brothers of Joseph asked their father to send him with them, the Bible tells us that Jacob himself sent Joseph to his brothers (Gen. 37:13, 14). But the Bible seems to contradict itself in this respect for in Gen. 37:4 we are told that Joseph was hated by his brothers because Jacob loved him more than he loved them and that Jacob was aware of this hatred. How could Jacob, knowing that his brothers hated him, send Joseph to them?

Moreover, Joseph appears to be only eleven or twelve years old at the time when this incident took place, because it is only for a boy of this tender age that the language used by Joseph’s brothers about him can be used. The Bible, however, places Joseph’s age at that time at seventeen or eighteen, which is evidently wrong.

1517. Important Words:

يرتع (he may enjoy himself) is derived from رتع which means, he (a beast) pastured at pleasure, eating and drinking plentifully and pleasantly; he (a man) enjoyed himself, going about cheerfully (Lane).

Commentary:

The words, *we shall surely keep guard over him*, also show that Joseph at that time was a mere lad of eleven or twelve years of age who required to be looked after and not a grown-up young man of seventeen who could easily take care of himself. See also the preceding verse.

1518. Commentary:

This verse lends further support to the view that Joseph was not seventeen or eighteen but much younger (v. 12); otherwise there was

15. They said, 'Surely, if the wolf devour him while we are a strong party, then we shall indeed be *great* losers.'

قَالُوْا لَئِنْ اَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ⑮

16. So, when they took him away, and agreed to put him into the bottom of a deep well, *they had their malicious design carried out*; and We sent a revelation to him, *saying*, 'Thou shalt surely *one day* tell them of this affair of theirs and they shall not know.'[1519]

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوْا بِهٖ وَاَجْمَعُوْٓا اَنْ يَّجْعَلُوْهُ فِيْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ ۚ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِاَمْرِهِمْ هٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ⑯

17. And they came to their father in the evening, weeping.[1520]

وَجَآءُوْٓ اَبَاهُمْ عِشَآءً يَّبْكُوْنَ ⑰ۜ

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no occasion for Jacob to fear his being devoured by a wolf. It also appears from this verse that Jacob had already been informed by God in a general way of the plot of Joseph's brothers to kill him. So, as if pre-arraigning them, Jacob used the same words which they were to use later in extenuation of their heinous crime.

1519. Commentary:

The words, *they shall not know*, hint that so helpless was Joseph's condition at that time that his brothers could not even imagine that he would ever rise to any greatness afterwards.

This verse points to two more resemblances between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Joseph was cast into a deep well by his brothers and the Holy Prophet had to take shelter in a cave (which is like a well) from the persecution of his brethren, the Quraish. The confinement of the Holy Prophet along with the Muslims in شعب ابي طالب (the low-lying depressed valley which belonged to the tribe of Abū Ṭālib), in consequence of the boycott compact agreed upon by the people of Mecca, also provides a point of resemblance with Joseph's having been cast into a well. Secondly, just as this verse tells us that Joseph was informed through revelation that there would come a time when God would bestow upon him power and glory and he would then inform his brothers of the bad treatment they had meted out to him, similarly the Holy Prophet was informed by revelation that though his enemies would compel him to flee from Mecca, yet he would return home victorious (28:86).

1520. Important Words:

عشاء (in the evening). عشاء (*'ishā'*) means, the time of nightfall or the first

18. They said, ‘O our father, we went forth racing with one another, and left Joseph with our things, and the wolf devoured him, but thou wilt not believe us even if we speak the truth.’**1521**

قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَآ اِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا
يُوْسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ ۚ وَمَآ
اَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ ع

19. And they came with false blood on his shirt. [a]He said, ‘Nay, but your souls have made a *great* thing appear light in your eyes. So *now* comely patience *is good for me*. And it is Allah *alone* Whose help is to be sought against what you assert.’**1522**

وَجَآءُوْ عَلٰى قَمِيْصِهٖ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ؕ قَالَ
بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ؕ فَصَبْرٌ
جَمِيْلٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا
تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾

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[a] 12:84.

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or beginning of the darkness of night; also the time from the declining of the sun (from the meridian) to the rising of the dawn (Lane).

1521. Commentary:

This verse also indicates that when Joseph was cast into a well he was a mere lad of eleven or twelve, otherwise his brothers would not have said that they made him take care of their things while they were playing. A young man of seventeen or eighteen is not entrusted with work of this kind. He himself can take part in all kinds of sports. Nor is he, when armed, likely to be attacked by a wolf, unless there be a pack of wolves, and Palestine is not a land where wolves roam in packs.

The words, *thou wilt not believe us even if we speak the truth*, show that Joseph's brethren were not habitual criminals, otherwise they would not have uttered words which bespoke nervousness and betrayed their offence.

1522. Important Words:

كذب (false) really means either a lie or a falsehood or the act of telling a lie, but here it is used in the sense of مكذوب i.e. false or that about which a lie is uttered (Lane).

سولت (made a great thing appear light) is derived from سال. The verb سول (*sawila*) of which the aorist is يسول means, he or it was or became lax, flaccid or uncompact; or it hung down loosely; or it was or became pendent or pendulous. They say سول له الشيطان i.e. Satan led him into error; or he facilitated to him the commission

20. And there came a caravan of travellers and they sent their water-drawer. And he let down his bucket *into the well.* ‘Oh, good news!’ said he, ‘Here is a youth!’ And they concealed him as a piece of merchandise, and Allah well knew what they did.[1523]

وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَاَرْسَلُوْا وَارِدَهُمْ
فَاَدْلٰى دَلْوَهٗ ؕ قَالَ يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ ؕ
وَاَسَرُّوْهُ بِضَاعَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾

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of great sins; or he incited him to indulgence in lusts; or he made the commission of great sins appear small in his eyes. The Arabic expression سولت له نفسه امرا means, his soul embellished or commended to him a thing or an affair; or his soul made it appear easy to him; or made it appear as a light matter in his eyes; or pictured to him what is foul as goodly (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse alludes to another point of difference between the Quranic account and the Biblical version. According to the Bible, Jacob believed the report of his sons to be true and declared that Joseph had really been "rent in pieces" by a wolf (Gen. 37:33); while the Quran says that he regarded their report as a concocted story. Other parts of the Bible, however, support the Quranic version. In Gen. 44:28 we have: And the one (child) went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since. If Jacob was really convinced that Joseph had been torn in pieces, the sentence, "I saw him not since" becomes quite meaningless. These words clearly show that in his heart of hearts Jacob thought Joseph to be alive, though for the time being he yielded to the inevitable.

The Talmud also agrees with the Quranic account and says that Jacob did not believe the statement of his sons to be true and that he was told in a vision that Joseph was alive (Jew. Enc.).

The verse provides another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Joseph’s brothers falsely declared that he had been slain, similarly, the Quraish falsely announced first at Uḥud and then at Mecca that the Prophet had been killed, with the difference that whereas Joseph’s brethren spoke of Joseph as having been killed by a wolf, the Quraish asserted that they had themselves killed the Holy Prophet. This is the tenth point of resemblance between the Holy Prophet and Joseph.

1523. Commentary:

It is noteworthy how God takes care of His faithful servants. Joseph’s brothers cast him into a deep well in

21. And they sold him for a paltry price, a few dirhams, and they were not desirous of it.[1524]

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍۭ بَخۡسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعۡدُوۡدَةٍ ۚ وَكَانُوۡا فِيۡهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِيۡنَ ٢١ ع

R. 3.

22. And the man from Egypt who bought him said to his wife, ‘Make his stay *among us* honourable. Maybe he will be

وَقَالَ الَّذِيۡ اشۡتَرٰىهُ مِنۡ مِّصۡرَ لِامۡرَاَتِهٖۤ اَكۡرِمِيۡ مَثۡوٰىهُ عَسٰۤى اَنۡ يَّنۡفَعَنَاۤ اَوۡ

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the wilderness but God so arranged that immediately afterwards a caravan arrived there. A man sent to fetch water from a well happened to go to the very well into which Joseph had been cast and this led to his being taken out alive.

The words, *And they concealed him as a piece of merchandise*, show that the members of the caravan looked upon Joseph as treasure and saw in him a youth of promise.

1524. Commentary:

It appears that when a member of the caravan took Joseph out of the well, his brethren became apprised of it and, declaring Joseph to be their slave, sold him to that very caravan for a paltry price. Thus the pronoun "they" in the clause, *they sold him for a paltry price*, stands for Joseph’s brethren and not for the caravan. The pronoun in the expression (of it) may mean either "him" or "it," standing either for Joseph or the price.

The Bible tells us that Joseph’s brothers sold him for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28). Their object in selling Joseph was obviously not to get money; they only did so fearing that if they did not declare Joseph to be their slave, the caravan might take him to be a free man and might send him home. So they represented him as their slave, and sold him for a small sum.

The context of the Quran also shows that those who are spoken of in this verse as selling Joseph were his brothers, and not the people of the caravan. For, in the preceding verse it has been said that when the caravan found Joseph, "they concealed him as a piece of good merchandise," whereas, in the verse under comment, we read that those who sold Joseph displayed no interest in him and "were not desirous" either of Joseph or of the price. This shows that those who are here spoken of as selling Joseph were not the members of the caravan, but, as the Bible tells us, Joseph’s own brethren.

The verse refers to another difference between the Bible and the Quran. According to the Bible, it was not a member of the caravan who drew Joseph from the well but Joseph’s own brothers (Gen. 37:28). The unreliability of the Biblical version is apparent from the fact that the passage dealing with this incident is full of contradictions. The Talmud also contradicts the Biblical account, of benefit to us; or we shall adopt him as a son.' [a]And thus did We establish Joseph in the land, and *We did so* that We might *also* teach him the interpretation of things. And Allah has *full* power over His decree, but most men know *it* not.[1525]

نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ
فِى الْاَرْضِ ۫ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ
الْاَحَادِيْثِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰۤى اَمْرِهٖ
وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

23. [b]And when he attained his *age of* full strength, We granted him judgement and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.[1526]

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗۤ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

24. And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him against

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ

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[a]12:57. [b]28:15.

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and its description of this incident agrees with that of the Quran (Jew. Enc. under Joseph).

1525. Important Words:

مثوى (stay) is derived from ثوى. They say ثوى بالمكان i.e. he remained, stayed or dwelt in the place; or he remained, stayed or dwelt long therein; or he alighted in the place. اثواه means, he made him to stay, or dwell, or he made him to stay or remain long. ثوى means, a guest. مثوى means, a place where one remains, stays or dwells; it also means staying or staying long in a place (Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The Egyptian who bought Joseph is known as Potiphar in Jewish literature (Enc. Bib. & Jew. Enc. under Potiphar; also Gen. 39:1). He was captain of the royal guard, an officer of high rank in ancient times. He seems to have been struck by the noble appearance of Joseph, and asked his wife to treat him with such honour and affection as are not ordinarily shown to a slave or servant. He expressed the hope that they might one day benefit by his ability or, if he proved to be worthy, might adopt him as their son. It appears that Potiphar had no issue.

1526. Commentary:

The verse does not mean that Joseph attained to prophethood as soon as he became of age. The Quran generally omits intervening details and mentions only the end.

وَغَلَّقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ؕ
قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ رَبِّيْٓ اَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

his will. And she bolted the doors, and said, 'Now come.' He said, 'I seek refuge with Allah. He is my Lord. He has made my stay *with you* honourable. Verily, the wrongdoers never prosper.'**1527**

1527. Important Words:

راودته (she sought to seduce him). راود is derived from راد which means, he or it came and went; he went to and fro; he was restless; it also means, he sought or desired a thing; راوده means, he endeavoured or sought to turn him to or from a thing. راوده عن الامر means, he endeavoured to turn him by blandishment or by deceitful arts from the thing. راوده على الامر means, he endeavoured to turn him by blandishment, etc., to the thing. The Quranic expression سنراود عنه اباه means, we will endeavour to turn his father from him by blandishment or artifice and to make him yield him to us; or we will strive to obtain him of his father. So the words راودته عن نفسه would mean, she desired or sought of him a sinful act using blandishment or artifice for that purpose; she tempted him to do the sinful act; she endeavoured to entice him and to make him yield himself to her; more literally, she endeavoured to turn him by blandishment, etc., from his disdainful noncompliance or from his purpose and will. الرود really signifies going about in search of a thing. المراودة means, seeking to make a person do a thing against his will (Lane & Mufradāt).

هيت لك (now come). هيت is a word of exclamation denoting wonder. The Arabs say هيت للحلم i.e. what forbearing mildness or clemency! The word is used in the sense of هلم or تعال or اقبل meaning, "come or come forward." It is also used to signify "hasten" and "set forth journeying." The words therefore mean, "come thou" or "now come." The words also signify, "come, I am ready for thee, or I am ready to receive thee" (Lane & Mufradāt).

معاذ الله (I seek refuge with God). معاذ is the noun-infinitive from عاذ. They say عاذ به من كذا i.e. he sought protection by him from that or sought refuge in him from that; or he put his trust in him, or relied upon him, for protection from such a thing. معاذ means, a refuge; a place to which one has recourse for protection or preservation; also the time at which one does so. The expressions معاذ الله and عياذ الله and عياذا بالله are all synonymous with اعوذ بالله معاذا i.e. I seek protection or preservation by God (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse clearly shows that the woman who sought to seduce Joseph failed in her efforts and that Joseph successfully resisted her temptation.

25. And she made up her mind with regard to him, and he made up his mind with regard to her. If he had not seen a manifest Sign of his Lord, *he could not have shown such determination.* Thus was it, that We might turn away from him evil and indecency. Surely, he was one of Our chosen servants.[1528]

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ
بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ
السُّوْٓءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا
الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ۝٢٥

The words, "He is my Lord," refer to God, and not to Joseph's Egyptian master, as some commentators have wrongly supposed. It is difficult to imagine that a highly spiritual man like Joseph should have abstained from sin merely out of regard for the paltry favours of a human benefactor and not for the manifold Divine boons.

Whatever honour Joseph had received from his Egyptian master was really in fulfilment of God's promises. So it was for the sake of his True Lord and Master that he followed the path of rectitude and refused to be seduced into sin, which would have amounted to an act of ingratitude far more towards God than to any human benefactor.

Joseph not only himself abstained from the heinous sin, but also warned his master's wife against its evil consequences by saying that *the wrongdoers never prosper*. The expression راودته translated as "she sought to seduce him against his will," literally means, as shown under Important Words, "she endeavoured to turn him from his purpose or will by blandishment and artifice and make him yield to her against his disdainful noncompliance." This meaning shows that Joseph abhorred the evil deed to which she invited him and was determined not to yield.

1528. Commentary:

This verse tells us that the wife of Joseph's master intended a thing about Joseph (i.e. copulation) in which she did not succeed. Similarly, Joseph intended a thing about her (i.e. turning her to pure thoughts), but he too did not succeed in his endeavour. That Joseph did not intend anything evil is clear from the previous verse. His only purpose was to dissuade her from her evil course.

By "manifest sign" is meant the heavenly signs which Joseph had already witnessed, e.g. the wonderful dream which foretold his future greatness (v. 5) and the revelation he had received when cast into the well, which also pointed to his later eminence and glory (v. 16). Surely, the person who was being prepared for the exalted office of a Prophet could not debase himself before an idolatrous woman.

26. And they both raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her lord at the door. She said, ‘What shall be the punishment of one who intended evil to thy wife, save imprisonment or a grievous chastisement?’[1529]

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيْصَهٗ مِنْ دُبُرٍ
وَّاَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ؕ قَالَتْ مَا
جَزَآءُ مَنْ اَرَادَ بِاَهْلِكَ سُوْٓءًا اِلَّآ اَنْ
يُّسْجَنَ اَوْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۲۶﴾

The words, *that We might turn away from him evil and indecency*, signify that a person who had witnessed such signs could not stoop to evil. They may also mean that God brought about these circumstances so that Joseph should no longer live in the evil company of his master’s wicked wife and her evil companions which might have exercised a pernicious influence on him.

Here there is another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as an attempt was made to tempt Joseph away from the path of piety and rectitude, similarly, the idolaters of Mecca made an unsuccessful attempt to make the Holy Prophet give up preaching the Unity of God by offering to make him their king or amass great wealth for him or give him in marriage the most beautiful girl in Arabia. The offer was of course disdainfully rejected by the Prophet with the historic words, "If you place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left hand, I will not give up preaching the Oneness of God." (Zurqānī & Hishām). This constitutes the eleventh resemblance between these two great Prophets.

1529. Commentary:

When Joseph saw that all his exhortations and admonitions to his master’s wife to desist from her evil course were of no avail, he thought he should no longer stay in the room, lest it might give rise to unfounded suspicions. So he hastened to leave her presence. Thereupon the woman, in order to prevent him from leaving the room, ran to the door to reach it before Joseph succeeded in getting out. There was thus a sort of race for the door. It was most probably at the door that the woman pulled Joseph’s shirt in order to pull him back and in so doing she tore his shirt at the back.

Here, again, the Bible differs from the Quran. The Bible says that when the woman caught hold of Joseph’s garment, he left it in her hand (Gen. 39:12). But as the Hebrews used to wear one garment only, which was generally long enough to cover the whole body, it is inconceivable that Joseph should have run away naked, leaving the only garment he was wearing in the woman’s hand. So the Quranic account that Joseph’s shirt was torn in the scuffle seems to be more reasonable.

27. He said, ‘She it was who sought to seduce me against my will.’ And a witness of her household bore witness *saying*, ‘If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has spoken the truth and he is of the liars.[1530]

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتۡنِيۡ عَنۡ نَّفۡسِيۡ وَشَهِدَ
شَاهِدٌ مِّنۡ اَهۡلِهَا ۚ اِنۡ كَانَ قَمِيۡصُهٗ قُدَّ
مِنۡ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتۡ وَهُوَ مِنَ الۡكٰذِبِيۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

28. But if his shirt is torn from behind, then she has lied and he is of the truthful.’[1531]

وَاِنۡ كَانَ قَمِيۡصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنۡ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتۡ
وَهُوَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

29. So when he saw his shirt torn from behind, he said, ‘Surely, this is a device of you women. Your device is indeed mighty.[1532]

فَلَمَّا رَاٰ قَمِيۡصَهٗ قُدَّ مِنۡ دُبُرٍ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ مِنۡ
كَيۡدِكُنَّ ؕ اِنَّ كَيۡدَكُنَّ عَظِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۹﴾

1530. Commentary:

Nothing can approach the nobility of mind of God’s Elect. In spite of the fact that Joseph was grievously sinned against, he bore himself with great dignity and refrained from exposing the evil deed of his temptress. But when she herself had the hardihood to bring an utterly false accusation against him, he was compelled to state the facts. A person who appeared to have noticed that Joseph’s shirt had been torn at the back at once came to the conclusion that the woman was to blame. Without having the courage to incriminate her, but wishing to exculpate Joseph, he gave his evidence in a general manner as if he were blaming no one, but was merely laying down a principle by which the culprit could be discovered.

1531. Commentary:

See note on the preceding verse.

1532. Commentary:

The pronoun "he" in the clause, *when he saw his shirt*, stands for the master of the house and not for the man who bore witness.

The words, *Your device is indeed mighty*, will thus be taken to have been spoken by Joseph’s master, and the pronoun "your" refers to "women" generally. In his endeavour to screen his wife as far as possible, he appears to accuse the whole of the fair sex of cunning and guile. But cunning is no characteristic of women; only those women who are oppressed and tyrannized over and whose rights are trampled upon generally develop a tendency to conspiring and adopting wily and cunning ways to avenge

30. O Joseph, turn away from this and thou, *O woman*, ask forgiveness for thy sin. Certainly, thou art of the guilty.'[1533]

يُوْسُفُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا ۜ وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ ۖۚ اِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِـِٕيْنَ ۝٣٠ ع ٣ ٩ ١٣

R. 4.

31. And women in the city said, 'The wife of the 'Azīz seeks to seduce her slave-boy against his will. He has infatuated her with love. Indeed, we see her in manifest error.'[1534]

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتٰىهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۚ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۭ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىهَا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝٣١

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themselves on their oppressors. Moreover, the words of a man spoken casually cannot be regarded as an established truth and must be treated with reserve.

1533. Commentary:

Here again there is a difference between the Bible and the Quran. According to the Bible Joseph's master believed the allegation of his wife to be true and held Joseph to be guilty and was angry with him (Gen. 39:19). But other verses of the Bible itself contradict this statement and support the Quran. In Genesis it is stated that when Joseph was sent to prison, its keeper committed all the prisoners to his care. The prison was under the charge of Potiphar, captain of the guard (Joseph's master), nay, it was in Potiphar's own house, as the following Biblical verses show: And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound (Gen. 40:2,3). Now it does not stand to reason that the keeper of the prison who was subordinate to Potiphar, Joseph's master, should have given the latter a position of honour in the prison when his superior looked upon him as one who sought to commit an outrage upon his wife. Not only that but we find that Potiphar himself put two of Pharaoh's officers, the chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers in charge of Joseph while the former were sent to the same prison (Gen. 40:4). These facts clearly show that Joseph's master believed him to be innocent of the heinous charge brought against him by his wife.

1534. Important Words:

العزيز (The 'Azīz) is derived from عز which means, he was or became mighty, potent, powerful or strong; or he was or became high or elevated in rank or condition or state; عزيز means, mighty, potent, powerful or strong; high or elevated in rank or condition

32. And when she heard of their *crafty* design, she sent for them and prepared for them a repast, and gave every one of them a knife and *then* said *to Joseph*, 'Come forth to them.' And when they saw him they thought much of him and [a]cut their hands, [b]and said, 'Allah be glorified! This is not a human being; this is but a noble angel.'[1535]

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ
إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَأً وَّآتَتْ كُلَّ
وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَّقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ
عَلَيْهِنَّ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ
أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا ۖ
إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ٣٢

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[a]12:51. [b]12:52.

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or state; noble, honourable, glorious or illustrious; proud, disdainful; invincible; a mighty king or a glorious king. العزيز is one of the names of God signifying the Mighty, Who overcomes everything; or He Who resists or withstands so that nothing overcomes Him; or the Incomparable or Unparalleled. It also signifies "king," because he has the mastery over the people of his dominions and the word was especially used about the ruler of Egypt i.e. the valley of the Nile together with Alexandria. It is a surname like النجاشي (Negus) applied to the King of the Abyssinians and قيصر (Kaiser) applied to the Emperor of the Romans (Lane & Aqrab).

شغفها (he has infatuated her with love). شغفه means, he or it struck or smote the pericardium of his heart. شغف بالشيء means, he was or became vehemently desirous of the thing. شغفه المال means, the property became embellished to him so that he loved it. The expression قد شغفها حبا means, he has affected her so that love of him has entered beneath the pericardium of her heart; or, love of him has struck or smitten or has rent the شغاف (pericardium) or the حجاب (midriff) of her heart (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Al-'Azīz stands here for Potiphar. According to modern technicality the rulers of Egypt are known by this title. But Potiphar was only the captain of the King's guard. It seems that at the time of the Holy Prophet the chiefs and dignitaries of Egypt were also known by this title. It is also possible that those women might have used this high title for Potiphar merely by way of flattery.

It appears that the incident of the wife of 'Azīz having made evil approaches to Joseph became public and the womenfolk of the locality began gossiping about it as is their wont.

1535. Important Words:

متكا (repast) is derived from وكا. They

say, واكأ على يديه, i.e. he leaned upon his hands or arms. اوكأه means, he set up for him a thing upon which to recline. اتكأ means, he sat leaning upon one of his sides; he leaned or rested his back or his side against a thing; he leaned or reclined upon a thing; he reclined upon a cushion. They say اتكأنا عند فلان i.e. we ate a repast with such a one. متكأ means, a place in which one reclines: a chamber or sitting room; that upon which one leans or reclines in eating, drinking or talking; food or repast, so called because high people used to recline when they sat to eat (Lane & Aqrab).

حاش لله (Allah be glorified). حاش is derived from حشي which means, he breathed short or he panted for breath or was out of breath. حاشاه منهم means, he set him aside as excluded from the description of the company or party; he excluded him from them, i.e. made an exception in regard to him. حاش لك means, far art thou from being included among those of whom I speak. حاش لله means, I ascribe unto God remoteness from every imperfection or freedom therefrom; generally implying wonder or admiration. The expression may be rendered as "How far or how free is God from every imperfection!" It is also used in the sense of معاذ الله i.e. I seek protection by God (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that when Potiphar’s wife heard of what the women in the city were saying about her infatuation for Joseph, she thought they really believed her to be guilty though outwardly they talked in such a manner as to show that they sought to exculpate her. So in order to remove their suspicions, she invited them to a feast. Tables were laid and a knife was provided for each of them. When all the guests were assembled, she asked Joseph to come out and serve them, but hardly had they cast a glance over his face when his innocent look and angelic appearance made them convinced of the purity of his conduct and all their suspicions so far as Joseph was concerned were dissipated.

The expression, *cut their hands*, may mean that when the women looked at Joseph, they were so struck with his saintly appearance that in a state of forgetfulness some of them happened to cut their hands with the knives they had. Or the sentence may be taken as figuratively expressing their wonder and amazement. The Arabic expression عض الانامل (biting the finger ends) is also used to express surprise, and, as sometimes the whole is used for a part, therefore the word "hands" may be said to have been here used for "finger-ends." According to the Talmud, oranges were served to the guests and the women inadvertently cut their hands owing to their being engrossed in looking at Joseph (Jew. Enc. & Talmud).

Incidentally, the verse shows that the word "angel" can also be used for a righteous and holy man. The verse also throws interesting light on the social customs of those days—the laying of cushioned seats and the use of knives, etc.

33. She said, ‘And this is he about whom you blamed me. I did seek to seduce him against his will, but he preserved himself *from sin*. And now if he do not what I bid him, he shall certainly be imprisoned and become *one* of the humbled.’[1536]

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِىْ لُمْتُنَّنِىْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ؕ وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَاۤ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. He said, ‘O my Lord, I would prefer prison to what they invite me; and unless Thou turn away their guile from me I shall incline towards them and be of the ignorant.’[1537]

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُوْنَنِىْۤ اِلَيْهِ ۚ وَاِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّىْ كَيْدَهُنَّ اَصْبُ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. So his Lord heard his prayer, and turned away their guile from him. Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.[1538]

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٥﴾

1536. Commentary:

Having made the women admit that their suspicions were baseless and that the sinful act had not yet been committed, Potiphar’s wife made an open confession before her guests who were her friends that she had failed in her efforts to tempt Joseph into sin. This unqualified confession of Potiphar’s wife gives the direct lie to the absurd allegation of some commentators that Joseph had become almost inclined towards committing the foul deed.

Strange are the ways of God. The very way by which this woman sought to bring disgrace upon Joseph proved to be the means of his future greatness.

1537. Commentary:

It is extremely regrettable that although Potiphar’s wife, who wanted to entice Joseph into sin, herself openly confessed to his innocence and her women-guests also bore witness to Joseph’s piety, and though in the present verse Joseph himself says that through God’s special grace he was saved from inclining to the commission of the evil deed, yet some commentators, writing long centuries after the event, do not hesitate to accuse Joseph of feeling inclined towards that evilly-disposed woman.

1538. Commentary:

God on the one hand made the women despair of Joseph and on the

36. Then it occurred to them (the men) after they had seen the signs *of his innocence* that *to preserve their good name* they should imprison him for a time.[1539]

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ
لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ع ٣٦ ع ٦ ١٤

R. 5.

37. And with him there entered the prison two young men. One of them said, ‘I see myself *in a dream* pressing wine.’ And the other said, ‘I see myself *in a dream* carrying upon my head bread of which the birds are eating. Inform us of the interpretation thereof; for we see thee to be of the righteous.’[1540]

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيٰنِ ؕ قَالَ
اَحَدُهُمَاۤ اِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىنِيْۤ اَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۚ
وَقَالَ الْاٰخَرُ اِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىنِيْۤ اَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ
رَاْسِيْ خُبْزًا تَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ؕ نَبِّئْنَا
بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ٣٧

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other strengthened his heart. This is how Joseph’s prayer was accepted.

1539. Commentary:

The imprisonment of Joseph, as is generally understood, was not the result of the acceptance of his prayer mentioned in the preceding verse. The acceptance of the prayer resulted in the guiles of the women being defeated. The idea of imprisoning Joseph was an afterthought. It had nothing to do with his prayer. It appears that as the ill fame of Potiphar’s wife spread in wider circles, her people thought that the best way to put a stop to this scandal-mongering was to imprison Joseph so that public opinion might come to regard him as the offender and the blame might be shifted from that guilty woman to this innocent man. The seeing of "signs" seems to refer to the incident of the garment and to the fact that the name of Potiphar’s wife began increasingly to come into greater disgrace.

1540. Commentary:

The expression معه (with him) does not necessarily mean that the two youths were sent to prison with Joseph at the same time. It only means that they were kept in the same prison with him.

The dreams of the butler and the baker are given in detail in Genesis (chap. 40), but their substance is the same as given in the Quran. The fact that they asked Joseph the interpretation of their dreams shows that he was held in very high esteem in the prison for his piety; for it is only from highly spiritual and pious

38. He replied, 'The food which you are given shall not come to you but I shall inform you of the interpretation thereof before it comes to you. This is on account of what my Lord has taught me. I have renounced the religion of the people who do not believe in Allah and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter.1541

قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيْكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقٰنِهٖٓ إِلَّا
نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيْلِهٖ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَّأْتِيَكُمَا ؕ
ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ ؕ إِنِّيْ تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ
قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ
هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

39. [a]And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. We cannot indeed associate anything as partner with Allah. This is of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind, but most men are ungrateful.1542

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ اٰبَآءِيْٓ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَإِسْحٰقَ
وَيَعْقُوْبَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لَنَآ أَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِاللّٰهِ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْنَا
وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾

40. O my two companions of the prison, are diverse lords

يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ءَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ

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[a] 2:134.

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persons that men ask the interpretation of their dreams. His two fellow-prisoners pay a further tribute to Joseph's piety in the words, *we see thee to be of the righteous*.

1541. Commentary:

This verse provides a very useful lesson for preachers, for it shows that a preacher should preach his message in a manner as not to tire or bore his hearers. Joseph assured the young men that he would not detain them long and would finish his discourse before their meal-time. The verse also shows how solicitous Joseph was in preaching the truth. Like Joseph, the Holy Prophet was also ever on the lookout for an opportunity to preach to the people and sometimes he had had recourse to extraordinary devices such as inviting them to a feast.

1542. Commentary

The expression, *This is of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind*, shows that prophethood is a boon not only for the person on whom it is conferred, but also for the entire people to whom he is sent, for all men profit by it according to their respective capacities.

better or Allah, the One, the Most Supreme?1543

41. [a]You worship nothing beside Allah, but *mere* names that you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has sent down no authority for that. [b]The decision rests with Allah alone. [c]He has commanded that you shall not worship anything save Him. [d]That is the right religion, but most men know *it* not.1544

خَيْرٌ اَمِ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ۝٤٠

مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَسْمَآءً
سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ
اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا
لِلّٰهِ ؕ اَمَرَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٤١

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[a]7:72; 53:24. [b]6:58; 12:68. [c]2:84; 17:24; 41:15. [d]30:31; 98:6.

1543. Commentary:

The verse means to say that whereas in this world of matter numerical strength counts for much, it is not so with God. Though He is One and Alone, He overpowers all and dominates over all.

1544. Commentary:

The verse draws attention to the great principle that the things which claim to be from God must be accompanied by some evidence of Divine authority and power. It is by this criterion that the claim of different religions to be of Divine origin must be tested. The religion which claims to be from God must show on what Divine authority it bases its claim. It does not stand to reason that a divine religion should depend on human and purely rational arguments for the demonstration of its truth. That religion which claims to come from Heaven must have heavenly evidence to support its claim. This is what is hinted at in the words, *Allah has sent down no authority for that.*

In the expression الدين القيم meaning "the right religion" i.e. a religion which puts into a right state the affairs of this world and of the next, the principle has been laid down that only that religion can be said to be a true religion which satisfies both the physical and the spiritual needs of man. It also points out that only that religion can be called "the right religion" which saves men from *shirk* or setting up equals to God. There is no doubt that *shirk* has proved a great hindrance in the way of human progress. How can a people who look upon elements which God has created for their service as objects of worship, examine and analyse them and put them to their service?

42. O my two companions of the prison, as for one of you, he will pour out wine, for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from off his head. The matter about which you inquired has been decreed.'[1545]

يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ اَمَّاۤ اَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِيْ
رَبَّهٗ خَمْرًا ۚ وَاَمَّا الْاٰخَرُ فَيُصْلَبُ فَتَاْكُلُ
الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَّاْسِهٖ ؕ قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ
تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ ؕ﴿۴۲﴾

43. And of the two, he said to him whom he thought to be the one who would escape: 'Mention me to thy lord.' But Satan caused him to forget mentioning *it* to his lord, so he remained in prison for some years.[1546]

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِيْ ظَنَّ اَنَّهٗ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِيْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۫ فَاَنْسٰىهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهٖ
فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ ؕ﴿۴۳﴾

R. 6.

44. And the King said, 'I see *in a dream* seven fat kine which seven lean ones eat up, and seven

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اِنِّيْۤ اَرٰى سَبْعَ بَقَرٰتٍ
سِمَانٍ يَّاْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبْعَ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ

1545. Commentary:

It may be asked why did Joseph, of whom the interpretation of the dreams was sought, say to the two prisoners that the affair about which they had inquired had already been decreed or settled. This was because the interpretation of dreams has much to do with their fulfilment. So long as a dream is not told to others, it may remain in abeyance. But when it is announced and communicated to others and its interpretation is sought, it is very generally fulfilled. This is why the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that an evil dream should not be communicated to others (Bukhārī, ch. on *Ar-Ru'yā min Allah*).

1546. Important Words:

بضع (some) is derived from بضع (*baḍ'a*). They say بضعه i.e. he cut it; or he cut it into pieces. بضع means, a part or portion of the night; a time thereof. The word denotes a variety of numbers but is generally understood to mean from three to nine. بضع رجال means, from three to nine men. The expression فلبث في السجن بضع سنين means, and he remained in the prison from three to nine years (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

When this prisoner busied himself with the satanic occupation of preparing wine for and offering it to his master, the purifying influence of green ears of corn and *seven* others withered. O ye chiefs, explain to me the meaning of my dream if you can interpret a dream.'[1547]

خُضْرٍ وَّ اُخَرَ يٰبِسٰتٍ ؕ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ اَفْتُوْنِیْ فِیْ رُءْيَایَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْيَا تَعْبُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

45. They replied, 'They are confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams.'[1548]

قَالُوْۤا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحْلَامِ بِعٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Joseph's holy company was gone and he forgot to speak of him to the King.

1547. Important Words:

عجاف (withered) of which the singular is اعجف is derived from عجف i.e. it (a beast) became lean, meagre and emaciated. اعجف means, lean, meagre or emaciated, having lost fatness or plumpness. وجه اعجف means, a face that has little flesh (Lane).

تعبرون (you can interpret a dream) is derived from عبر. They say عبر السبيل (*'abara*) i.e. he travelled or passed along the way as though he cut it. عبر النهر (*'abbara*) means he conveyed him across the river. عبر الرؤيا means, he interpreted or explained the dream and told its final sequel or result. They say عبر عما في نفسه i.e. he declared or explained what was in his mind. They say عبرت عن فلان i.e. I spoke for such a one. The Quranic expression ان كنتم للرؤيا تعبرون means, if you be the interpreters of the dream, or if you can interpret a dream (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It appears from this verse that the King was so fully convinced that his vision was real and true that he not only asked the learned men of his court to interpret it but also wished them to tell him what he should do to escape its evil effects, if any. The vision seemed to be so vivid that the King was deeply affected by it and his fright became the means of Joseph's deliverance from the prison.

1548. Important Words:

اضغاث (confused) of which the singular is ضغث (*ḍighthun*) is derived from ضغث (*ḍaghatha*) which means, he collected together the thing. ضغث الحديث means, he confused or confounded the tradition or story. ضغث of which the plural is اضغاث means, a handful of things mixed together; what is confused and without truth and reality (Lane).

احلام (dreams) is the plural of حلم (*ḥulm*) which means, a dream or vision in sleep, especially one that is evil (Lane).

Commentary:

By "such dreams" is here meant "the evil dreams" of the kind mentioned above, namely, dreams which cannot be interpreted by reason of their being vague and confused. In

46. And he of the two who had escaped, and who *now* remembered after a time, said, 'I will let you know its interpretation, therefore send ye me.'[1549]

وَقَالَ الَّذِىْ نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ اُمَّةٍ اَنَا اُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ فَاَرْسِلُوْنِ ﴿۴۶﴾

47. 'Joseph! O thou man of truth, explain to us the meaning of seven fat kine which seven lean ones devour, and *of* seven green ears of corn and of *seven* others withered; that I may return to the people so that they may know.'[1550]

يُوْسُفُ اَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيْقُ اَفْتِنَا فِىْ سَبْعِ بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ يَّاْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبْعِ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ خُضْرٍ وَّاُخَرَ يٰبِسٰتٍ ۙ لَّعَلِّىْ اَرْجِعُ اِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾

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such dreams truth is often mixed with falsehood, and, not being free from the wanderings of the mind, they cannot be said to be wholly divine. But, as later events showed, the dream of the King was not of that nature.

1549. Important Words:

ادّكر (remembered) which is derived from ذكر is really اذتكر and gives the same meaning as تذكّر i.e. he remembered or he became reminded of (Lane).

امّة (time). See 11:9.

Commentary:

The verse shows that the man who escaped was an ordinary person and not a court dignitary. This is why he asked the permission of the court to go to Joseph. The words, *I will let you know its interpretation*, show that, because of his past experience, this man was sure that Joseph would be able to interpret the vision correctly. In ancient times priests and religious divines exercised great influence in the royal courts.

1550. Commentary:

The words, *that I may return to the people so that they may know*, show that the butler addressed them to Joseph with a view to inspiring hope in him that when he returned to the court with the interpretation, the people would realize that Joseph was a holy man and was innocent of the wicked charge imputed to him. The butler also meant by these words to offer an excuse for his failure so far to fulfil his promise to Joseph, which was that no favourable opportunity had yet offered itself to bring his case to the notice of the King and that it was only now that a suitable opportunity had presented itself.

48. He replied, ‘You shall sow for seven years, working hard and continuously, and leave what you reap in its ear, except a little which you shall eat.[1551]

قَالَ تَزْرَعُوْنَ سَبْعَ سِنِيْنَ دَاَبًا ۚ فَمَا
حَصَدْتُّمْ فَذَرُوْهُ فِيْ سُنْۢبُلِهٖٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا
مِّمَّا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾

49. Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall consume all that you shall have laid by in advance for them except a little which you may preserve.[1552]

ثُمَّ يَاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَّاْكُلْنَ
مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّا
تُحْصِنُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

50. Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall

ثُمَّ يَاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَامٌ فِيْهِ يُغَاثُ

1551. Important Words:

دابا (working hard and continuously). See 3:12.

Commentary:

Joseph, while interpreting the dream, not only advised the people to lay up corn for the years of famine but also suggested to them the way in which they could safely do so, viz. by leaving the corn in the ear, for that was the safest way of preserving it. It is quite possible that Joseph should have deduced this method of preserving corn from the words of the dream itself, for after being shown seven fat and seven lean cows, the king was shown seven green and seven dry ears, and from this repetition Joseph might have deduced the remedy for the impending calamity.

1552. Commentary:

Joseph explains that the seven years of famine would be so severe that all that the people had stored up during the first seven years of plenty would be eaten up except very little which they might have saved, for fear lest the famine should become prolonged or for the purpose of seed.

Here we have another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as in the time of Joseph, Egypt was visited with a severe seven-year famine, so in the Holy Prophet’s time Arabia had a terrible famine which lasted for seven long years. It was so severe that some people were forced to eat carrion. At last, the Holy Prophet was requested to pray to God for the removal of the famine. He prayed to God and the famine left the land after the people had been reduced to a most pitiable plight (Bukhārī and Muslim). This is the twelfth point of resemblance between these two noble Prophets.

be relieved and in which they shall give presents *to others*.'[1553] ٦ ع ٧ ١٦

النَّاسُ وَفِيْهِ يَعْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ ع

1553. Important Words:

يغاث (shall be relieved) is derived from غاث (aorist يغيث) and غاث (aorist يغوث) and اغاث. They say غاث الله البلاد (aorist يغيث) i.e. God watered the country with rain; sent down rain on the land. غاثه (aorist يغوث) or اغاثه means, he aided or helped him; he removed from him trouble or affliction. اغاثنا المطر means, the rain gave us relief. (Lane & Aqrab).

يعصرون (give presents) is derived from عصر which means: (1) he pressed or squeezed the thing so as to force out its juice, etc.; (2) he took or collected the produce of the earth; (3) he aided or succoured or saved or preserved (him); (4) he gave something to someone or did some benefit to someone (Lane).

Commentary:

Thinking in their ignorance that the verb is used only in the sense "they shall be rained upon," some Christian critics of the Quran have objected that as it very seldom rains in Egypt and the fertility of its soil depends entirely on the flooding of the Nile, therefore the statement that "the people shall be rained upon" betrays the ignorance of the Revealer of the Quran of even the elementary facts of geography. But these critics, instead of exposing the ignorance of the Quran, have betrayed their own ignorance of the Arabic language. The verb as shown under Important Words is used in three different senses, i.e. (1) sending down rain; (2) helping and aiding; and (3) relieving and removing trouble. Of these the latter two quite agree with the text of the Quran. But even if the word be taken in the first-mentioned sense there is no ground for objection, for though it is true that the fertility of the soil in Egypt depends on the flooding of the Nile, the flooding of the Nile itself depends on the rain on the mountains where lies its source. So if Joseph is represented here as saying that after seven years of famine, rains would fall, he obviously meant to say that rains would fall in such parts of the land as would cause the swelling of the Nile, which would bring relief to the famine-stricken people of Egypt.

The objection that the Quran has used an ambiguous and equivocal word is also devoid of all substance. The ambiguity lies in the critics' own minds. The Quran has every right to use any word in the sense in which it is used in the Arabic language. If the critics of the Quran are not conversant with the particular use of a certain word, they should blame their own ignorance and not the Quran. In fact, the beauty of the Quranic style lies in the fact that it has used a word which applies with equal appropriateness to the times both of Joseph and the Holy Prophet, whose respective peoples were visited with a severe seven-year famine. Of the three meanings of the word يغاث given under Important Words, the first applied to the time of

R. 7.

51. And the King said, ‘Bring him to me.’ But when the messenger came to him, he said, ‘Go back to thy lord and [a]ask him how fare the women who cut their hands: for, my Lord well knows their crafty design.’1554

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِیْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُ
الرَّسُوْلُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ اِلٰی رَبِّكَ فَسْـَٔلْهُ مَا
بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الّٰتِیْ قَطَّعْنَ اَیْدِیَهُنَّ ؕ اِنَّ
رَبِّیْ بِكَیْدِهِنَّ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

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[a] 12:32.

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the Holy Prophet and the latter two to that of Joseph. Thus instead of exposing any weakness in the diction of the Quran, the use of this word emphasizes its excellence.

1554. Commentary:

When the King saw that the wise men of his court had failed to interpret his dream and that Joseph had not only interpreted it rightly but had also suggested a remedy for the impending affliction, and when he learnt from his butler that Joseph’s previous interpretation of two dreams had also turned out to be true, he realized that Joseph was no ordinary man and desired to release him from the prison forthwith. But Joseph refused to be released until a full inquiry was made into his case and he was proved to be innocent of the charge laid against him. His object in demanding an inquiry seems to be twofold: firstly, that the King might know that he was innocent so that on no future occasion might his mind be poisoned against him by evilly-disposed persons on the basis of the alleged cause of his imprisonment; secondly, that Potiphar, his benefactor, might not remain under the impression that he had proved faithless to him.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have once said that if he had remained in prison for so long a time as Joseph did and, like Joseph, had received the orders of his release, he would at once have left the prison (Bukhārī & Muslim). This readiness of the Holy Prophet to leave the prison in contrast to the hesitancy of Joseph to do so shows the former to be spiritually superior to the latter. It is true that the vindication of one’s honour is an act of virtue, but to welcome the opportunity for discharging one’s duties as a Prophet of God, as the Holy Prophet’s reported readiness implied, leaving one’s honour to take care of itself, is certainly an act of much higher spiritual eminence.

The words, *how fare the women who cut their hands*, spoken by Joseph show that the incident of the cutting by the women of their hands did actually take place; otherwise Joseph could not have referred to it in these words. Either the women, while

52. He (the King) said *to the women*, 'What was the matter with you when you sought to seduce Joseph against his will?' [a]They said, 'He kept away *from sin* for fear of Allah—we have known no evil against him.' The wife of the 'Azīz said, 'Now has the truth come to light. *It was* I *who* sought to seduce him against his will, and surely, he is of the truthful.'**1555**

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَاوَدتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ
عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ ۚ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا
عَلَيْهِ مِن سُوٓءٍ ۚ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ
الْـَٰٔنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَاوَدتُّهُۥ عَن
نَّفْسِهِۦ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَمِنَ الصَّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

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[a] 12:32.

absorbed in conversation, had inadvertently cut their hands, or they might have declared that, by bringing a false accusation against Joseph, they had cut their own hands i.e. had landed themselves in a false position. If these words had only expressed the women's state of mind and nothing actual had happened, Joseph could not have referred to "the cutting of the hands."

1555. Important Words:

ماخطبكن (what was the matter with you) خطب (*khaṭbun*) is the noun-infinitive from خطب (*khaṭaba*). They say خطب القوم i.e. he addressed the people and delivered to them an exhortation or admonition. خطب المرأة means, he asked or demanded the woman in marriage. خطب means, a thing, an affair, or a business, small or great, that one seeks or desires to do or that may be a subject of discourse; a great thing or affair; or the cause or occasion of a thing or an event; or an affliction or calamity. They say ماخطبك i.e. what is the thing or affair or business that thou seekest or desirest to do; or, what is the cause of thy coming? (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse shows that the King had become so convinced of the righteousness of Joseph that, on hearing of the accusation against him, he at once believed it to be false. This is why the women, judging from the way in which the King questioned them, realized that he looked upon Joseph as a righteous man, and so they confessed the truth. But by so doing they only bore witness to the innocence of Joseph, without in any way accusing Potiphar's wife. The latter, however, fearing lest after exonerating Joseph of all blame the women might proceed to testify to her misconduct, hastened to confess her guilt, although she had not yet been questioned by the King. She did

53. *Joseph said, 'I asked for that enquiry to be made* so that he (the 'Azīz) might know that I was not unfaithful to him in *his* absence and that Allah suffers not the device of the unfaithful to succeed.[1556]

ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّيْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِيْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

54. And I do not hold my own self to be free from weakness; for, the soul is surely prone to enjoin evil, save that whereon my Lord has mercy. Surely, my Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.'[1557]

وَمَآ اُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَاَمَّارَةٌۢ بِالسُّوْٓءِ اِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵۴﴾

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this to escape the greater shame of being condemned out of the mouth of others and perhaps also to win some credit for speaking the truth without being questioned.

1556. Commentary:

The words of this and the following verses were uttered by Joseph and not by the seducing woman as supposed by some commentators. The pronoun "him" in the clause لم اخنه (I was not unfaithful to him) refers to Potiphar. The verse shows Joseph as stating the object for which he had caused this enquiry to be held, which was to clear himself of the possible charge that he had behaved faithlessly towards his master, Potiphar.

The words "the unfaithful" here refer to those who had plotted against Joseph. As Joseph was a Prophet of God, the plotters against him could not succeed, and hence God caused their plot to be exposed and defeated.

1557. Commentary:

As stated in the preceding verse, the words *I do not hold my own self* etc., were uttered by Joseph. The verse thus constitutes a striking commentary on the purity and nobility of mind of God's Prophets and His Elect. Joseph, as stated above, had demanded an enquiry to be held about the imputation made against him. In this verse he disclaims any intention to establish his own purity or attribute any good to himself by that enquiry. His object, he says, is to show by this means that God does not allow the machinations of dishonest people to succeed against His Prophets and also that no one can tempt into sin those to whom God gives His protection. Joseph declares that he had caused this inquiry to be made, not to make a show of his own purity but to indicate that nobody can lead astray the man

55. And the King said, 'Bring him to me that I may take him specially for myself.' And when he had spoken to him, he said, 'Thou art this day *a man* of established position *and* trust with us.'**1558**

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِيْ بِهٖٓ اَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهٗ قَالَ اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِيْنٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿۵۵﴾

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whom God Himself protects from evil. As for himself, he admits in the verse that human nature alone—unaided by Divine mercy, which manifests itself through revelation, religious law and Divine grace—cannot protect itself from evil. Man, by nature, is apt to fall into evil and it is God's connection alone which can lead him to the right path.

The clause الا ما رحم ربی (save that whereon my Lord has mercy) is capable of three different interpretations: (a) save the نفس (soul or spirit) whereupon my Lord has mercy; in this case the particle ما stands for; نفس (b) save that man upon whom my Lord has mercy; in this case ما will be taken as meaning من i.e. that person; and (c) yes, but it is God's mercy which saves whom it chooses; in this case the particle will be taken as مصدرية and the expression ما رحم would mean رحمة (mercy). These three meanings refer to the three stages in the spiritual growth of man. The first meaning refers to the stage when man has attained the stage of spiritual perfection. At this stage he is known by the name نفس مطمئنة (i.e. the soul at rest or the soul in peace). The second meaning is applied to man when he is yet in the stage of نفس لوامة (i.e. self-accusing soul) viz. when a man is struggling against sin and his evil propensities, sometimes overcoming him and at others being vanquished. The third meaning applies to a man when his evil inclinations have the better of him. At this stage he is described by the term; نفس امارة (i.e. the soul prone to evil). All these kinds of نفس (soul) have been mentioned in the Quran (89:28; 75:3; 12:54) and have been fully discussed in the *Teachings of Islam* by Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah.

1558. Commentary:

In the words, *I may take him specially for myself*, the King seems to administer a veiled rebuke to Potiphar, hinting that, whereas he (Potiphar) had failed to treat with honour a man like Joseph, he himself would now bestow on him the honour he deserved by admitting him to his special favour. This was the attitude of the King before he had spoken to Joseph. But when he had talked with him, he became still more enamoured of him and hastened to confer high rank upon him. In the Bible we read: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "According unto thy word shall all people be ruled: only in the throne will

56. He said, 'Appoint me over the treasures of the land, for I am a *good* keeper, *and* possessed of knowledge.'[1559]

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِیْ عَلٰی خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِ ۚ اِنِّیْ حَفِیْظٌ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۵۶﴾

57. [a]And thus did We establish Joseph in the land. He dwelt therein wherever he pleased. [b]We bestow Our mercy on whomsoever We please, and We suffer not the reward of the righteous to perish.[1560]

وَ کَذٰلِکَ مَکَّنَّا لِیُوْسُفَ فِی الْاَرْضِ ۚ یَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَیْثُ یَشَآءُ ؕ نُصِیْبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَ لَا نُضِیْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِیْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾

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[a]12:22. [b]2:106; 3:75.

I be greater than thou"… "and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had" (Gen. 41:40-43).

1559. Commentary:

Most probably the King offered Joseph the post of Prime Minister, but Joseph preferred charge of the finance department. His choice seems to have been dictated by the desire to enjoy comparative freedom from the material cares and court intrigues which are incidental to premiership and also to give his single-minded attention to the successful running of the department with which the fulfilment of the King's dream was so deeply concerned.

1560. Commentary:

The words, *And thus did We establish Joseph in the land*, also occur in 12:22, where they are followed by the expression, *that We might also teach him the interpretation of things*, while in the verse under comment they are succeeded by the sentence, *We bestow Our mercy upon whomsoever We please*. This is because in the former case Joseph's mettle was yet to be tried. But now that he had emerged triumphant from the ordeal, he was henceforward to enjoy uniform honour and prosperity.

This verse contains the thirteenth point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as the brethren of Joseph, being jealous of his father's regard for him, sought to remove him from their way and bring him to grief and dishonour, similarly, the Holy Prophet was compelled to leave his native city by his own kith and kin; but God conferred on him, as on Joseph, honour and distinction; with the difference that, whereas Joseph received his authority and honour from a king, the Holy Prophet was indebted to no earthly potentate for all the power and glory that came to him. Indeed, the difference in the way in which these two Prophets rose to power and eminence is symbolic of the difference in their spiritual status.

58. And surely, the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and fear *God*.

وَلَاَجۡرُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ خَيۡرٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا
وَكَانُوۡا يَتَّقُوۡنَ ؏ ﴿٥٨﴾
٧ ع ٨ ١

R. 8.

59. And Joseph's brethren came and entered in unto him; and he knew them, [a]but they knew him not.[1561]

وَجَآءَ اِخۡوَةُ يُوۡسُفَ فَدَخَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِ
فَعَرَفَهُمۡ وَهُمۡ لَهٗ مُنۡكِرُوۡنَ ﴿٥٩﴾

60. And when he had provided them with their provision, he said, 'Bring me your brother on your father's side. Do you not see that I give you full measure *of corn* and that I am the best of hosts?[1562]

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمۡ بِجَهَازِهِمۡ قَالَ ائۡتُوۡنِىۡ
بِاَخٍ لَّكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَبِيۡكُمۡ‌ۚ اَلَا تَرَوۡنَ اَنِّىۡۤ
اُوۡفِى الۡكَيۡلَ وَاَنَا خَيۡرُ الۡمُنۡزِلِيۡنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

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[a] 12:16.

1561. Commentary:

The incident related in this verse pertains to the time when there was famine in the country and Joseph was at the height of his power.

The verse also provides the fourteenth point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Joseph had risen to such eminence that his brothers could not recognize him because they could not imagine that he whom they had cast into a well and who was sold as a slave could rise to so eminent a position. Much in the same way, the Meccans marvelled at the power and prestige that the Holy Prophet had gained. This is apparent from the spontaneous expression of amazement and surprise by Abū Sufyān, a Meccan chief, at the remarks which Heraclius, the Christian Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, made when he received the Prophet's epistle inviting him to accept Islam. Heraclius, after making some enquiries about the Holy Prophet from Abū Sufyān who then happened to be in Syria, said that if what Abū Sufyān had said regarding the Prophet was true, the latter would one day become master of the land under his feet. This remark about the Prophet spontaneously uttered by a mighty monarch filled Abū Sufyān with surprise and he exclaimed, 'The affair of the son of Abū Kabshah has indeed become great' (Bukhārī, ch. on *Jihād*). Ibn Abī Kabshah was a term of contempt applied to the Holy Prophet by the Meccans.

1562. Important Words:

جهزهم (he provided them) and جهازهم

61. But if you bring him not to me, then there shall be no measure *of corn* for you from me, nor shall you come near me.’

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَأْتُوْنِيْ بِهٖ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْنِ ٦١

62. They replied, ‘We will try to induce his father to part with him and we will certainly do *it*.’**1563**

قَالُوْا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفٰعِلُوْنَ ٦٢

(their provision) are both derived from جهز which means, he fitted out, equipped, furnished or supplied (a bride, a traveller, a corps or an army) with requisites. جهاز means, requisites or equipment, etc. It also means, excellent goods that are conveyed to another (Lane).

كيل (measure) is derived from كال. They say كال له الطعام or كاله الطعام i.e. he measured out the food to him. اكتال عليه الطعام means, he measured for himself the food from him. This is why the Arabs say كال المعطى و اكتال الآخذ i.e. for the giver the word used is كال and for him who receives the word used is اكتال. كيل means, a measure with which corn etc., is measured, whether of wood or iron. Sometimes the word كيل is used in the sense of weighing also, as they say كال الدراهم i.e. he weighed the dirhams (Aqrab & Tāj).

Commentary:

According to the Bible, Joseph said to his brethren, "And bring your youngest brother unto me; then shall I know that ye are no spies" (Gen. 42:34). This shows that Joseph declared his brothers to be spies and threatened to take action against them. The Quran, on the other hand, represents Joseph as showing kindness to them. It is possible that, from the way in which Joseph put so many searching questions to his brothers regarding their family and parents, they might have themselves thought that he had taken them for spies. Otherwise, a Prophet of God such as Joseph could not condemn them as spies, when he knew they were his brothers. Such a statement on his part would have amounted to a lie. The Bible seems only to have reported what Joseph’s brothers thought and has not described the facts as they actually happened. Joseph could not possibly accuse his brothers of espionage simply because they failed to bring Benjamin with them.

1563. Commentary:

The expression سنراودعنه اباه literally means, we will endeavour to turn his father from him by blandishment or artifice or we will endeavour to beguile his father (Lane). One sin leads to another. They committed one sin by their evil treatment of Joseph. Now they stoop to another. They declare insolently—and that to none other than Joseph himself—that they will beguile *his* (Benjamin’s) father.

63. And he said to his servants, ‘Put their money *also* into their saddlebags that they may recognize it when they return to their family; haply they may come back.’[1564]

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيٰنِهِ اجْعَلُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِيْ
رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُوْنَهَآ اِذَا انْقَلَبُوْٓا
اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ۝٦٣

64. And when they returned to their father, they said, ‘O our father, *further* measure *of corn* has been denied us, so send with us our brother that we may obtain our measure, and we will surely *be able to* take care of him.’[1565]

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَبِيْهِمْ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مُنِعَ
مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَآ اَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ
وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ۝٦٤

First, they speak of the Prophet Jacob not as our father, but as *his* (Benjamin’s) father and, secondly, they express their intention of making a fool of him.

1564. Commentary:

Although Joseph exercised great patience and self-control and did not exhibit any such feeling or emotion as must have risen in his compassionate heart on seeing his brothers, his natural affection for them did make him return to them the money they had paid as the price of the grain. This does not mean that by doing so he defrauded the public treasury, for he could easily pay so small an amount to the treasury from his own pocket.

The words, *that they may recognize it*, mean that his brothers might appreciate the favour that was shown to them and might thereby be induced to return.

Here we have another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as these verses throw light on the great love of Joseph for his brothers so that, notwithstanding their cruel treatment of him, he was kind to them and desired their return, so the Holy Prophet, notwithstanding the deep-rooted enmity of the Meccans against him, always wished them well. How great was the Prophet’s love for his people and how great his anxiety that they might see the truth and accept it, it may be judged from the following words of the Quran: *Haply, thou wilt kill thyself by over exertion in thy work because they believe not* (26:4).

1565. Commentary:

Mark the audacity of Joseph’s brothers revealed in the words, *we will surely be able to take care of him*. The former spirit of boastfulness still seems to cling to them.

65. He said, 'I cannot trust you with him, save as I trusted you with his brother before. But Allah is the best Protector, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.'[1566]

قَالَ هَلْ اٰمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا كَمَآ اَمِنْتُكُمْ
عَلٰٓى اَخِيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا ۪
وَّهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ۝٦٥

66. And when they opened their goods, they found their money returned to them. They said, 'O our father, what more can we desire? Here is our money returned to us. We shall bring provision for our family, and guard our brother and we shall have in addition the measure of a camel *load*. That is a measure which is easy *to obtain*.'[1567]

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوْا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ
رُدَّتْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِيْ ؕ
هٰذِهٖ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَنَمِيْرُ اَهْلَنَا
وَنَحْفَظُ اَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيْرٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
كَيْلٌ يَّسِيْرٌ ۝٦٦

1566. Commentary:

In the words, *Allah is the best Protector*, Jacob administers a subtle rebuke to his sons by hinting to them that, after their tragic experience with Joseph, it is a pity that even now they should not rely on the protection of God but on their own power. He further hints that he had not entrusted Joseph to their care before, nor would he now entrust his brother to their protection. His trust now, as before, lay in God alone.

1567. Important Words:

نمير (we shall bring provision) is derived from مار. They say مار اهله i.e. he brought or conveyed wheat or other corn or provision of any kind to or for his family or his household (Lane).

يسير (easy to obtain) is derived from يسّر (*yassara*) which is again derived from يسر (*yasara*) which means, he was or became gentle, tractable, submissive, manageable or easy. يسّره means, he made it easy; he facilitated it. يسير means, little or small in quantity; petty; paltry; of no weight or worth; easy to get; easy and gentle in tractableness, submissiveness or manageableness (Lane). See also 2:220.

Commentary:

Although the Quran does not clearly mention what conveyance was used by Joseph's brethren in their journey; the words, *the measure of a camel-load*, used here as well as in 12:73 apparently lead to the inference that they made their journey on camels. But the Bible says that the

67. He said, ‘I will not send him with you until you give me a solemn promise in the name of Allah that you will surely bring him to me, unless you are encompassed.’ And when they had given him their solemn promise, he said, ‘Allah watches over what we say.’[1568]

قَالَ لَنْ اُرْسِلَهٗ مَعَكُمْ حَتّٰى تُؤْتُوْنِ
مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَتَاْتُنَّنِيْ بِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّحَاطَ
بِكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اٰتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ
عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ﴿٦٧﴾

68. And he said, ‘O my sons, enter not by one gate, but enter by different gates; and I can avail you nothing against Allah. The decision rests only with Allah. [a]In Him do I put my trust

وَقَالَ يٰبَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوْا مِنْۢ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ
وَّادْخُلُوْا مِنْ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ ؕ وَمَاۤ
اُغْنِيْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنِ

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[a] 11:57, 89; 14:12.

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journey was made on asses; for we read in Gen. 43:24, "And he gave their asses provender." The question which of the two statements is correct can best be answered by finding out which conveyance the Prophet Jacob and his family generally used on their journeys. The Bible itself tells us that the animal which they usually used was the camel (Gen. 31:17).

Moreover, the long and difficult nature of the journey also favours the inference that it was performed on camels. It must, however, be noted that the words "a camel-load" may not necessarily mean a load put on a camel’s back, but may denote only the load which a camel can ordinarily carry, though it may be loaded on asses. In this case the difference between the statements of the Bible and the Quran about the form of conveyance disappears.

1568. Important Words:

موثقا (a solemn promise) is derived from وثق, for which see 2:28,64. It is synonymous with ميثاق meaning a solemn promise, a covenant, etc. (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse points to a resemblance which the Holy Prophet possessed with Benjamin, the brother of Joseph from his own mother. Just as Jacob, before sending Benjamin to Egypt, took from his other sons a solemn pledge to protect him, similarly, before the Holy Prophet consented to migrate to Medina, ‘Abbās, his uncle, took from the representatives of the Medinites, later known as Anṣār, a solemn undertaking that they would protect him by all means in their power (Hishām & Ṭabarī).

and in Him let all who would trust put their trust.'[1569]

الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ
فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

69. And when they entered in the manner their father had commanded them, *Jacob's purpose was fulfilled but* it could not avail them anything against Allah, except that there was a desire in Jacob's mind which he *thus* satisfied; and he was surely possessed of *great* knowledge because We had taught him, but most men know not.[1570]

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوْهُمْ ؕ
مَا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا
حَاجَةً فِيْ نَفْسِ يَعْقُوْبَ قَضٰىهَا ؕ وَاِنَّهٗ
لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ ٨ ع ١١ ٢

R. 9.

70. And when they visited Joseph, he lodged his brother with himself. *And* he said, 'I am thy brother; so *now* grieve not at what they have been doing.'[1571]

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰۤى اِلَيْهِ
اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّيْۤ اَنَا اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ
بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾

1569. Commentary:

As Joseph's brothers had told Jacob that they were suspected of being spies in Egypt, so, in order not to excite or strengthen a similar suspicion, Jacob advised them to enter the town separately and not in a body. The advice may be taken as hinting that Jacob had possibly been told by Divine revelation that Joseph was alive in Egypt and therefore he asked them to enter the town singly so that Joseph might have an opportunity to meet and talk to Benjamin in private.

For the meaning of the term توکل (trust in God) see 3:123.

1570. Commentary:

The desire of Jacob alluded to in this verse is the same to which reference has been made in the preceding verse viz. that they should not be suspected as spies or that, being informed by revelation that the official who distributed the grain was none other than Joseph, Jacob wanted Benjamin to meet him separately from the others.

1571. Commentary:

The words, *so now grieve not at what they have been doing*, may

71. And when he had provided them with their provision, he put the drinking cup in his brother’s saddlebag. Then a crier cried, ‘O ye *men of the* caravan, you have been guilty of theft.’[1572]

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمۡ بِجَهَازِهِمۡ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِيۡ رَحۡلِ اَخِيۡهِ ثُمَّ اَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ اَيَّتُهَا الۡعِيۡرُ اِنَّكُمۡ لَسٰرِقُوۡنَ ﴿٧١﴾

72. They said, turning towards them, ‘What is it that you miss?’[1573]

قَالُوۡا وَاَقۡبَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمۡ مَّاذَا تَفۡقِدُوۡنَ ﴿٧٢﴾

73. They replied, ‘We miss the King’s measuring cup, and whoso brings it shall have a camel-load, and I am surety for it.’[1574]

قَالُوۡا نَفۡقِدُ صُوَاعَ الۡمَلِكِ وَلِمَنۡ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمۡلُ بَعِيۡرٍ وَّاَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيۡمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

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mean either that Joseph assured Benjamin that he was his selfsame brother who was supposed to be dead or that he desired to comfort him that henceforth he would be safe from the machinations of his brothers.

1572. Commentary:

The word جعل (put) may either mean that Joseph ordered the cup to be put in his brother’s sack knowingly so that he might use it on his way home; or that it was put there by mistake i.e. when Joseph had drunk water from it while the two brothers were engaged in conversation, the cup happened to be placed among Benjamin’s articles, Joseph not knowing that it was there.

1573. Commentary:

The words, *turning towards them*, hint that on this occasion Joseph’s brothers had no guilty conscience.

1574. Important Words:

صواع (measuring cup) is derived from صاع. They say, صاع الشيء i.e. he folded or doubled the thing; he twisted it or bent it. صاع الحب means, he measured the corn with the measure known as صاع. صاع القوم means, he incited the people against one another. صاع is a well-known measure for measuring corn, etc. صواع means, a certain measure for measuring corn; a cup of the kind called جام from which one drinks (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The incident mentioned in this and the contiguous verses has given rise to much controversy. It is absurd to say, as some commentators of the Quran have done, that Joseph first intentionally put the drinking cup into his brother’s sack, and then accused him of theft—an action much below his dignity, inasmuch as it represents

74. They answered, ‘By Allah, you know well that we came not to act corruptly in the land, and we are not thieves.’

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سٰرِقِيْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾

75. They said, ‘What then shall be the punishment for it, if you *are found to* have told a lie?’

قَالُوْا فَمَا جَزَآؤُهٗۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾

76. They replied, ‘The punishment for it—he in whose saddlebag it is found shall himself be the penalty for it. Thus do we punish wrongdoers.’[1575]

قَالُوْا جَزَآؤُهٗ مَنْ وُّجِدَ فِيْ رَحْلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَآؤُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾

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him as guilty not only of lying but also of great injustice to his brother. The whole story has originated with the Bible from which some commentators seem to have unthinkingly borrowed it. See Genesis 44:2-15.

The Quran makes the whole matter quite clear. What Joseph is mentioned as having put into his brother’s sack was a سقاية (a drinking cup), while the vessel which was declared by the royal proclaimer to be missing was صواع (a measuring cup). Unlike the سقاية the صواع has here been called صواع الملك i.e. the measuring cup of the King because it was Government property. Joseph had himself put a سقاية (a drinking cup) into his brother’s sack without the latter’s knowledge, that it might be of use to him on the journey. But the صواع الملك i.e. the royal measuring cup which seemed to have been in Joseph’s hand when he was saying farewell to his brother happened to be placed in Benjamin’s sack by mistake, nobody knowing how it found its way there. In search for this precious thing the luggage of the whole caravan was searched, that of Benjamin last of all. But it happened to be found in his luggage along with the سقاية (drinking cup) which Joseph had himself put there. Joseph at once understood how the mistake had occurred, but, thinking that all this was God’s own plan for detaining Benjamin, he judiciously kept silent until the caravan was gone. This is how Benjamin remained behind with Joseph.

1575. Commentary:

It was so devised by God that Joseph’s brothers in a fit of excitement themselves suggested that he in whose sack the measuring cup might be found should be detained to explain his conduct. If they had said instead that he who was proved to be the thief should be kept as a prisoner, Joseph would have had no ground to

77. Then he began *the search* with their sacks before the sack of his brother; then he took it out from his brother's sack. Thus did We plan for Joseph. He could not have taken his brother under the King's law unless Allah had *so* willed. [a]We raise in degrees *of rank* whomsoever We please; and over every possessor of knowledge is One, Most-Knowing.1576

فَبَدَاَ بِاَوۡعِيَتِهِمۡ قَبۡلَ وِعَآءِ اَخِيۡهِ ثُمَّ
اسۡتَخۡرَجَهَا مِنۡ وِّعَآءِ اَخِيۡهِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
كِدۡنَا لِيُوۡسُفَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لِيَاۡخُذَ اَخَاهُ فِىۡ
دِيۡنِ الۡمَلِكِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ نَرۡفَعُ
دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنۡ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَفَوۡقَ كُلِّ ذِىۡ عِلۡمٍ
عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۷۷﴾

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[a] 6:84.

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detain his brother, for he knew that he was not a thief. But the words which escaped the lips of his brothers were that Joseph might detain him in whose sack the measuring cup was found. Thus Joseph was able to keep back his brother without the latter being accused of theft.

1576. Commentary:

The words, *Thus did We plan for Joseph*, make it clear beyond any shadow of doubt that the whole thing was planned by God Himself, Joseph having no hand in it. Quite inadvertently Joseph happened to place the King's measuring cup in Benjamin's luggage and his brothers happened themselves to make the suggestion which enabled Joseph to detain Benjamin.

Incidentally, the verse also shows that even a Prophet living under an alien government should abide by its laws and give it his full cooperation. Joseph desired to keep his brother with him, but the law of the land forbade him to do so. A Providential combination of circumstances, however, enabled him to satisfy his heart's desire. The mistaken view held by some Muslims that a foreign Government is not entitled to their loyalty and cooperation finds no support in Islam. It tends adversely to affect their morals, and their whole attitude towards their rulers is calculated to become based on insincerity, even hypocrisy.

The words, *then he began the search with their sacks before the sack of his brother*, do not mean that Joseph made the search personally. The pronoun "he" refers to the man who announced the loss of the measuring cup and who naturally himself came forward to make the search. The reason why he searched Benjamin's luggage last lies in the fact that, owing to Joseph's kindly attitude towards him, the proclaimer naturally desired to show the greatest possible deference to Benjamin.

78. They said, 'If he has stolen, a brother of his had *also* committed theft before.' But Joseph kept it secret in his heart and did not disclose it to them. He *simply* said, 'You seem to be in the worst condition; and Allah knows best what you allege.'[1577]

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ اَخٌ لَّهٗ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ۚ فَاَسَرَّهَا يُوْسُفُ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ وَلَمْ
يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ اَنْتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ
اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾

79. They said, 'O exalted one, he has a very aged father, so take one of us in his stead; for we see thee to be of those who do good.'[1578]

قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا
كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ
مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾

80. He replied, 'God forbid that we should take *any* save him with whom we found our property; for then we should certainly be unjust.'[1579]

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ نَّاْخُذَ اِلَّا مَنْ وَّجَدْنَا
مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهٗٓ ۙ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ ع

1577. Commentary:

One sin leads to another. Joseph's brothers had first sought to put him to death. Now quite unashamedly they hastened to accuse him of theft. Strangely enough, some commentators, instead of dismissing this baseless accusation as a malicious lie, start searching for some act of stealing in Joseph's life and have gone so far as to declare that while a child he had stolen a few things from the house of his aunt.

The words, *You seem to be in the worst condition*, pathetically point to Joseph's painful thought that, instead of repenting after their early lapse, his brothers had now become even more degenerate than before.

1578. Commentary:

Not being satisfied with accusing Benjamin of theft, they proceed to disown him and even refuse to acknowledge him as their brother saying, *he has a very aged father.*

1579. Commentary:

This verse constitutes a strong refutation of the Christian doctrine of Atonement. Joseph said that it would be an act of injustice on his part to detain an innocent person in place of a guilty one although Joseph's brethren had voluntarily offered to suffer for Benjamin. The Bible also

R. 10.

81. And when they despaired of him, they retired, conferring together in private. Their leader said, “Know ye not that your father has taken from you a solemn promise in the name of Allah and how, before this, you failed in your duty with respect to Joseph? I will, therefore, not leave the land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me. And He is the Best of judges.[1580]

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْـَٔسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا نَجِيًّا ؕ قَالَ
كَبِيْرُهُمْ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اَبَاكُمْ قَدْ اَخَذَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا
فَرَّطْتُّمْ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ اَبْرَحَ
الْاَرْضَ حَتّٰى يَاْذَنَ لِيْۤ اَبِيْۤ اَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ
لِيْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾

supports this refutation, for it says that when Benjamin’s brethren offered to be taken as servants in place of Benjamin, Joseph said, "God forbid that I do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." (Gen. 44:17). In the face of such clear repudiation by the Bible of one person atoning for the sins of another, how could the sufferings of Jesus atone for the sins of his followers?

1580. Important Words:

خلصوا (they retired) is derived from خلص which means: (1) it was or became clear or pure or unmixed. They say خلص من القوم i.e. he retired or withdrew or went away from the people. The Quranic expression خلصوا نجيا means, they retired, conferring privately together (Lane).

نجيا (conferring together in private). نجي is derived from نجا and means: (1) a secret; (2) one to whom a secret is confided; (3) one who confers with another in private; (4) the act of conferring in private (Aqrab).

كبير (leader) means, great in body or rank or nobility; big or full-grown; learned or most knowing; teacher or master; lord or chief; old or advanced in age, etc. (Lane). See also 11:4.

Commentary:

Christian critics of the Quran accuse it of being ignorant of even well-known facts of history, basing their criticism on the fact that it was Judah, the fourth among the brothers, and not Reuben, the eldest of them—as they take the word كبير (leader) to mean—who declared that he would not go back to his father without Benjamin. It is strange that, whenever these self-styled judges of the Quran happen to come across any difference between the narrative of the Quran and that of the Bible, they

82. "Return ye to your father and say, 'O our father, thy son has stolen and we have stated only what we know and we could not be guardians over the unseen.[1581]

اِرۡجِعُوۡۤا اِلٰۤی اَبِیۡکُمۡ فَقُوۡلُوۡا یٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّ ابۡنَکَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَ مَا شَہِدۡنَاۤ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمۡنَا وَ مَا کُنَّا لِلۡغَیۡبِ حٰفِظِیۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾

83. And inquire of *the people of* the city wherein we were, and

وَ سۡـَٔلِ الۡقَرۡیَۃَ الَّتِیۡ کُنَّا فِیۡہَا وَ الۡعِیۡرَ الَّتِیۡۤ

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complacently assume the Bible to be right, as if it is altogether free from anachronism and misstatements, while the fact is that it has been shown even by Christian writers themselves to occupy a very low place among reliable books of history. To doubt the authenticity of an historical fact related by the Quran merely on the basis that it does not agree with the Bible is, to say the least, simply capricious. But even assuming the present Biblical account to be correct, the Quranic account cannot be found fault with. The word which the Quran has used with respect to the brother who refused to go is کبیر which means, "big" or "elder" and not اکبر which means "the eldest." Judah, being the fourth son of Jacob, was indeed one of the big or elder brothers of Joseph.

Again, کبیر does not always mean "big" or "elder" but, as shown under Important Words, it also means "leader" and "great in estimation, rank or dignity," and it is in this sense that the word has been used here and applies to Judah and not to Reuben. For, according to the Bible, the misconduct of Judah's three elder brothers had resulted in his taking precedence over them (Gen. 49:3-8). Of him Jacob said, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise…thy father's children shall bow down before thee." (Gen. 49:8). That Judah was greater than Reuben in the eyes of Jacob is also apparent from the fact that, when Reuben offered his two sons as hostages for Benjamin, Jacob refused to send Benjamin (Gen. 42:37, 38), but when Judah said, "I will be surety for him," Jacob gave his consent (Gen. 43:9-10).

Jacob's prediction of Judah's superiority started the long feud which later separated Judah and Israel.

1581. Commentary:

This and the following verses are in continuation of what Judah said to his brothers in the previous verse. The words, *we could not be guardians over the unseen*, may mean, we have related what we saw but we do not know what is the reality of the matter concerning the charge of stealing against Benjamin. Or they may mean, we had given thee our plighted word that we would bring Benjamin back with us but we did not know that matters would come to such a pass. We had given thee our pledge quite honestly.

of the caravan with which we came, and certainly we are speaking the truth.' "[1582]

اَقۡبَلۡنَا فِيۡهَا ؕ وَ اِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾

84. [a]He replied, 'Nay, but your souls have embellished to you an evil thing. So *now* comely patience *is good for me*. May be Allah will bring them all to me; for He is the All-Knowing, the Wise.'[1583]

قَالَ بَلۡ سَوَّلَتۡ لَكُمۡ اَنۡفُسُكُمۡ اَمۡرًا ؕ فَصَبۡرٌ جَمِيۡلٌ ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِيَنِىۡ بِهِمۡ جَمِيۡعًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الۡعَلِيۡمُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۸۴﴾

85. And he turned away from them and said, 'O my grief for Joseph!' And his eyes became white because of grief, and he

وَتَوَلّٰى عَنۡهُمۡ وَقَالَ يٰۤاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوۡسُفَ وَابۡيَضَّتۡ عَيۡنٰهُ مِنَ الۡحُزۡنِ

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[a] 12:19.

1582. Commentary:

In the verse قرية (city) is in reality اهل قرية (people of the city) and عير (caravan) is اصحاب العير (members of the caravan). The words اهل and اصحاب have been omitted to lend emphasis to the statement. The construction "inquire of the caravan" would signify "if you inquire of any member of the caravan he would testify to the truth of our statement."

1583. Commentary:

The verse does not mean that Jacob accused his sons of making a false report about the detention of Benjamin. What he is represented here as saying is that, owing to their enmity with Benjamin, the idea that he could not be guilty of theft did not occur to them, but there must certainly have been some misunderstanding in the matter. The verse shows that Jacob had been foretold by God that Joseph was living and that all three brothers would come back safe.

The pronoun هم (them) used in the words, *Maybe, Allah will bring them all to me*, is in the plural which, according to the rules of Arabic grammar applies to more than two. The persons referred to here thus are Joseph, Benjamin, and Judah. Judah's regard for his promise seems to have made a good impression on Jacob's mind and therefore he began to feel pain at his absence also and did not forget him in his prayer.

In the words, *He is the All-Knowing, the Wise*, Jacob seems to hint that God had revealed to him the reality of the matter, and that whatever had happened, had happened in pursuance of a divine plan for the welfare of the family and was suppressing *his sorrow.*[1584]

فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ (٨٥)

86. They said, 'By Allah, thou wilt not cease talking of Joseph until thou art wasted away or thou art of those who perish.'[1585]

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوْنَ حَرَضًا اَوْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْهٰلِكِيْنَ (٨٦)

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that their past sufferings would serve as a prelude to future prosperity.

1584. Important Words:

ابيضت (became white) is derived from بيض which again is derived from باض. They say باضه i.e. he surpassed him in whiteness. بيض means, he whitened a thing or made it white. بيض السقاء means, he filled the skin with water or milk; or, contrarily, he emptied it. ابيض means, it was or became white. The expression ابيضت عيناه من الحزن is used regarding a person who is stricken with grief and means, the world became dark for him or his eyes became white with grief. (Lane & Biḥār).

Commentary:

In view of the meaning of the word ابيضت given under Important Words the verse cannot mean that Jacob became blind on account of excessive weeping. The expression ابيضت عيناه من الحزن only means that his eyes became white because of grief; or (according to one meaning of the word) his eyes became filled with tears on account of grief. The interpretation of these words that Jacob's eyes became blind is evidently wrong for the following reasons: (1) Arabic idiom does not bear it out, for the becoming white of eyes never means their becoming blind. (2) The Quran represents Jacob as displaying extraordinary patience, hinted at in his words when told that Joseph had been devoured by a wolf and also when Benjamin and Judah failed to return to him (vv. 19 & 84). Now, it is a strange sort of patience if he became blind on account of weeping for his sons. (3) It does not at all become a Prophet of God that he should go on bewailing and weeping for any worldly thing, however great, till he becomes blind. (4) The present verse itself tells us that Jacob was كظيم i.e. he had succeeded in repressing his grief. This shows that he neither wept excessively nor became blind on account of it. (5) The expression ابيضت عيناه is used in Arabic only to express a person's great grief and sorrow, and is never used about a person's becoming blind through weeping and wailing.

1585. Important Words:

حرضا (art wasted away) is the noun-infinitive from حرض which means, he became in a corrupt or disordered state, being sick and diseased; or he became heavily oppressed by disease; or he became emaciated by grief or by excessive love; or he became constantly affected by grief so as to

87. He replied, ‘I only complain of my sorrow and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you know not.[1586]

قَالَ إِنَّمَآ أَشْكُوا۟ بَثِّى وَحُزْنِىٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

88. O my sons, go ye and search for Joseph and his brother and [a]despair not of the mercy of Allah; for none despairs of Allah’s mercy save the unbelieving people.’[1587]

يَٰبَنِىَّ ٱذْهَبُوا۟ فَتَحَسَّسُوا۟ مِن يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَا۟يْـَٔسُوا۟ مِن رَّوْحِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يَا۟يْـَٔسُ مِن رَّوْحِ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

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[a] 15:57; 39:54.

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be at the point of death; or he suffered protracted disquietude of mind and disease; he was unable to rise from or quit his place; he was or became low, or sordid or bad, possessing no good; he was neglected or forsaken. حرض means, a man corrupt in body and in intellect; a man in a corrupt or disordered state; sick or diseased; having a corrupt or disordered stomach; suffering from protracted disquietude of mind and disease; weary or fatigued and at the point of death; emaciated or dissolved by excessive grief or love, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This allegation of the brothers of Joseph is repudiated by the Prophet Jacob in the reply given in the next verse.

1586. Commentary:

In this beautiful verse Jacob pours out his heart to God, in Whom all holy men seek solace. He also hints at the fact that he knew from God that Joseph, Benjamin and Judah were alive.

1587. Commentary:

This verse leaves no doubt that God had informed Jacob not only of Joseph’s being alive but also of his being in Egypt. If Jacob had thought that Joseph had been devoured by a wolf or had perished in some other way, he could not at the present stage have bidden his sons search for him, particularly in Egypt.

The verse also lays down an infallible principle of success not only in spiritual but also in temporal matters viz. to avoid despair and despondency under all circumstances. Indeed, the root of most failures lies in despondency and despair. He who despairs of success can never attain his object. Indeed, he can never act as he ought to.

In the spiritual realm people who do not believe in the forgiveness of sins never feel the urge to exert themselves to the utmost and overcome them. Similarly, those who do not believe that human nature is pure and unsullied and that man has

89. And, when they came before him (Joseph), they said, 'O exalted one, poverty has smitten us and our family, and we have brought a paltry sum of money, so give us the full measure, and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable.'[1588]

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِ قَالُوۡا يٰۤاَيُّهَا الۡعَزِيۡزُ مَسَّنَا وَاَهۡلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئۡنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُّزۡجٰىةٍ فَاَوۡفِ لَنَا الۡكَيۡلَ وَتَصَدَّقۡ عَلَيۡنَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجۡزِى الۡمُتَصَدِّقِيۡنَ ۝٨٩

90. He said, 'Do you know what you did to Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant?'[1589]

قَالَ هَلۡ عَلِمۡتُمۡ مَّا فَعَلۡتُمۡ بِيُوۡسُفَ وَاَخِيۡهِ اِذۡ اَنۡتُمۡ جٰهِلُوۡنَ ۝٩٠

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been endowed with great powers and faculties do not try to develop them to their utmost limit. The Holy Prophet inculcated this supreme lesson in his followers, saying that they should never give way to despair. He is reported to have said لكل داء دواء الا الموت i.e. For every disease there is a remedy, except death. Similarly, he said, من قال هلك القوم فهو اهلكهم i.e. He who says that such and such people have perished, in fact he it is who causes them to perish (by creating a feeling of despair in them) (Muslim, Part II, vol. 2). Indeed all success lies in hope and action, not in vain and futile daydreaming which does not go beyond making castles in the air.

1588. Commentary:

The Arabic word عزيز (meaning, an honourable or exalted one) does not seem to be a specific title, though in later times i.e. after the advent of Islam, the Kings of Egypt came to be known by this title. The ancient Egyptians did not speak Arabic and therefore we cannot think that the Ministers of Egypt were known by this title. So in the verse under comment the word has been used only in the sense of a chief or an exalted person. In this sense also Potiphar has been called عزيز in v. 52.

The conduct of Joseph's brothers on this occasion seems to be inexplicable. Either they had morally sunk so low that, ignoring the real purpose of their present visit to Egypt, which was to make a search for Joseph, Benjamin and Judah, they began to beg for corn, or, perhaps fearing lest they should be taken for spies, they begged for corn to hide the real purpose of their visit.

1589. Commentary:

It appears that Joseph could not, on this occasion, bear to see his brothers degrade themselves by thus begging for corn and decided to reveal himself to them; but he appears to be shy of

91. They replied, ‘Art thou Joseph?’ He said, ‘*Yes*, I am Joseph and this is my brother. Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Verily, whoso is righteous and is steadfast—[a]Allah will never suffer the reward of the good to be lost.’1590

قَالُوْٓا ءَاِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوْسُفُ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا يُوْسُفُ وَهٰذَآ اَخِيْ ۫ قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾

92. They replied, ‘By Allah! Surely has Allah preferred thee above us and we have indeed been sinners.’1591

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِـِٕيْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

93. He said, ‘No blame shall lie on you this day; may Allah

قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ؕ يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ

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[a] 12:57.

approaching the subject. He therefore here reminds them of what they did with Joseph and his brother and thus disclosed indirectly his identity, at the same time comforting them by saying that they should worry no more about their past misdeeds because what they had done was the result of ignorance as they did not realize the full implication of their deeds. It is the exhibition of such good manners on such difficult occasions that shows the great moral heights to which man can rise.

1590. Commentary:

The way in which Joseph referred to the past behaviour of his brothers, coupled with the repeated assurance of their father that Joseph was alive, did not take long in suggesting to them the idea that the high dignitary standing before them was no other than Joseph himself. So they asked in surprise, "Art thou Joseph?", upon which Joseph, not desiring to keep them in suspense any longer, at once revealed his identity to them. After having disclosed himself to them, he gently told them that one could not overcome difficulties by merely begging and suffering oneself to be degraded, but that the secret of all success lay in piety and patience, in hard work and in trusting in God Who was ever the Protecting Friend of the righteous.

1591. Commentary:

At long last the good nature of Joseph’s brothers manifested itself. They admitted that, in spite of all their opposition to Joseph, God had exalted him over them and he deserved it; for it is they who had been the sinners.

forgive you! And He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.[1592]

لَكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾

94. Go with this shirt of mine and lay it before my father: he will come to know. And bring to me the whole of your family.'[1593]

اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِىْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ
اَبِىْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا ۚ وَاْتُوْنِىْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ
اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ ع

ع ١٠ ١٤ ٤

1592. Important Words:

تثريب (blame) is derived from ثرب. They say, ثربه i.e. he stripped the beast of the fat covering the bowels; he stripped the man of his garment. تثريب means, removing the fat over the bowels; act of blaming or reproving or punishing for an offence or a crime; severe blaming or reproving that takes away brightness of countenance; reminding a man of his offences and crimes and exposing the foulness of his deeds to him (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse throws interesting light on the nobility of Joseph's character. He did not keep his brothers in suspense nor even give them time to crave his forgiveness, but at once removed all their fears and apprehensions as concerning the treatment he would now extend to them; by telling them forthwith that his pardon was unreserved and unqualified. This magnanimous treatment of his brothers by Joseph is alone sufficient to immortalize him.

This large-hearted and generous forgiving of his brothers by Joseph constitutes his greatest and most outstanding resemblance to the Holy Prophet. Like Joseph, the Holy Prophet, too, gained honour and power in flight and banishment; and when after years of exile he entered his native town as a conqueror, at the head of ten thousand Companions, and Mecca lay prostrate at his feet, he asked his people what treatment they expected from him. "The treatment that Joseph accorded to his brethren," they replied, "Then no reproach shall lie on you this day," promptly returned the Holy Prophet. This noble treatment by the Prophet of his erstwhile bloodthirsty enemies, the Quraish of Mecca, who had left no stone unturned to compass his death and destroy him root and branch stands unparalleled in the whole annals of human history.

1593. Important Words:

وجه (before) gives a number of meanings, e.g. face; the part of a thing facing one; direction etc., القى الشيء على وجهه means, he put or placed the thing before or in front of him.

يات بصيرا (will come to know). بصير means, seeing; endowed with mental perception; knowing (Lane).

Commentary:

Joseph gave his brothers his shirt to

R. 11.

95. And when the caravan departed, their father said, ‘Surely, I feel the scent of Joseph, even though you take me to be a dotard.’[1594]

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيْرُ قَالَ اَبُوْهُمْ اِنِّيْ لَاَجِدُ رِيْحَ يُوْسُفَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تُفَنِّدُوْنِ ۝٩٥

96. [a]They replied, ‘By Allah, thou art assuredly in thy old error.’[1595]

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ اِنَّكَ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيْمِ ۝٩٦ ع

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[a] 12:9.

lay before their father, so that the sight of it might please him, as the sight of the first shirt had grieved him, and he might be induced to pray for his brothers and extend to them his pardon.

The words, *he will come to know*, mean that formerly Jacob had known only by Divine revelation that Joseph was alive and his knowledge was then only a matter of belief. Now, by actually seeing the shirt the belief would become converted into factual knowledge.

1594. Important Words:

تفندون (take me to be a dotard) is derived from فند (*fannada*) which is derived from فند (*fanada*) which means, he uttered a falsehood; he committed mistakes in extreme old age; he became weak in judgement by reason of extreme old age. افند means, he became weak in intellect or he doted. فنده (*fannada-hū*) means, he pronounced him to be an utterer of falsehood; he blamed him; he pronounced his judgement to be weak; مفند (*mufannad*) is one who is weak in judgement or unsound in mind by reason of extreme old age or disease; one who confounds things in his speech (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse shows that even before the caravan reached home, Jacob told his people that in spite of all appearances to the contrary he hoped to meet Joseph soon; and in order to lend emphasis to his conviction, he added the words "even though you take me to be a dotard" meaning thereby, "you consider this meeting to be an impossibility, being not more than the wishful thinking of an old man, but I know it as a fact and a certainty."

1595. Important Words:

ضلالك (thy error). ضلال is derived from ضل which means, he erred or he lost his way; he was or became confounded or perplexed and was unable to see his right course; he forgot. ضلال means, error; losing or missing the right course. The Arabs say تمادى فى اضاليل الهوى i.e. he persevered in the errors of love (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse brings out the marked

97. And when the bearer of glad tidings came, he laid it before him and he became enlightened. *Then* he said, 'Did I not say to you: I know from Allah what you know not?'**1596**

فَلَمَّآ اَنۡ جَآءَ الۡبَشِيۡرُ اَلۡقٰٮهُ عَلٰى وَجۡهِهٖ فَارۡتَدَّ بَصِيۡرًا ۚ قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ ۚۙ اِنِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٩٧﴾

98. They said, 'O our father, ask forgiveness of our sins for us; we have indeed been sinners.'**1597**

قَالُوۡا يٰۤاَبَانَا اسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ذُنُوۡبَنَاۤ اِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِـِٕيۡنَ ﴿٩٨﴾

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difference between those who receive Divine revelation and those who do not. The certainty attained by one inspired by God is not vouchsafed to others. In spite of his emphatic assertion that he would soon meet Joseph, the members of Jacob's family refused to believe it possible and attributed Jacob's conviction to an error of judgement or his extreme love for Joseph.

1596. Commentary:

If, as some commentators say, Jacob had really become blind and his blindness had been removed by the casting of Joseph's shirt at his face, he should have attributed the restoration of his sight to Joseph's shirt and would have declared it as a miracle. But he refers to no such unusual happening but only to the divine knowledge about Joseph's being alive, which he had long before imparted to his sons. Thus what the verse really means is that when Joseph's shirt was laid before Jacob, the conviction that Joseph was alive which, being based on revelation, was previously only a matter of faith, now became converted into factual knowledge. This is the meaning of the words, *he became enlightened.*

In fact, the knowledge of God's Prophets is of two kinds: (a) spiritual knowledge which they get direct from God by means of revelation; (b) material or secular knowledge which they acquire through their physical senses and other material means. When spiritual knowledge becomes supplemented and supported by the testimony of physical senses, it becomes complete in every sense and no vestige of doubt or ambiguity remains. As long as knowledge gained through spiritual means remains a matter of faith and does not go beyond conviction, it is capable of various interpretations: but when it is reinforced and corroborated by physical facts, it becomes a certainty beyond the possibility of doubt or dispute.

1597. Commentary:

One good action leads to another. When Joseph pardoned his brothers, the weight of sin to some extent became lifted from their hearts. They

99. He said, 'I will certainly ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Surely, He is the Most Forgiving, the Merciful.'[1598]

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّيْ ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٩٩﴾

100. And when they came to Joseph, he put up his parents with himself, and said, 'Enter Egypt in peace, if it please Allah.'[1599]

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰٓى إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوْا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

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repented of their sins and, as this verse shows, they no longer thought their own repentance to be sufficient. So they also requested their father to pray to God to forgive them. They now realized that man's anger was nothing compared with God's wrath; therefore they thought it necessary first of all to make peace with God and to ask His forgiveness through their father. This request implied Jacob's pardon, for he could not have prayed for them, as he promised in the following verse, unless he had himself forgiven them.

1598. Important Words:

سوف (will) is a word used to change the aorist from the present (حال) to the future (مستقبل) denoting postponement. سوف افعل means, I will do (not I do or am doing) such a thing. The Arabs say, فلان يقتات السوف i.e. such a one lives only by means of things hoped for (Lane). See 9:28.

Commentary:

Jacob's reply to the request of his sons for forgiveness portrays the true inner nature of man. He hints to them in the word سوف (will) that after reconciliation, love and affection do not at once take the place of anger and wrath in the heart of a person. The after-effects of bitterness take some time to disappear. Joseph had been preparing himself for a long time to pardon his brothers, so his forgiveness was full and immediate and he also prayed to God to forgive them. But such was not the case with Jacob. This is why Jacob said that he would take some time to become fully reconciled with them and to be in a position to pray for them, though at the same time he comforted his erring sons by drawing their attention to the great mercy and all-comprehensive forgiveness of God.

1599. Commentary:

Joseph's real mother had died but the use of the word "parents" in the verse beautifully hints that a stepmother is as much entitled to one's respect and affection as one's real mother. The verse also shows that Joseph had gone out of the town to receive his parents.

On starting to do a new work, a Muslim is enjoined to say انشاء الله (if God wills or if it pleases God). By

101. And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they *all* fell down prostrate *before God* for him. And he said, ‘O my father, this is the fulfilment of my dream of old. My Lord has made it true. And He bestowed a favour upon me when He took me out of the prison and brought you from the desert after Satan had stirred up discord between me and my brethren. Surely, my Lord is Benignant to whomsoever He pleases; for He is the All-Knowing, the Wise.[1600]

وَرَفَعَ اَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوْا لَهٗ
سُجَّدًا ۚ وَقَالَ يٰۤاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاْوِيْلُ رُءْيَايَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ ۫ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّيْ حَقًّا ؕ وَقَدْ
اَحْسَنَ بِيْۤ اِذْ اَخْرَجَنِيْ مِنَ السِّجْنِ
وَجَآءَ بِكُمْ مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ نَّزَغَ
الشَّيْطٰنُ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَ اِخْوَتِيْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ
لَطِيْفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

using this formula he associates God with his intentions and his works and invokes His protection from evil influences. It is certain that when a man associates God with his work he will not only try to perform that work in a virtuous manner but will also be prevented from thinking of evil deeds, for he cannot use this pious expression with respect to evil deeds. The offering of this prayer by Joseph, in spite of his being most resourceful and powerful in the land at that time, reveals his great piety and humility.

The words, *Enter Egypt in peace*, hint that Joseph had probably been informed by Divine revelation of the dangers that the progeny of Israel had later to face in Egypt.

1600. Commentary:

As the word رفع (raised) also means, "to present one to a person of high rank" (3:56), the verse is capable of two interpretations: Firstly, that Joseph presented his parents to the King, for in this case العرش (the throne) would signify the King. According to the Bible, Joseph presented his father and some of his brethren to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:2, 7). Secondly, it may mean that Joseph made his parents sit on his own throne, for in ancient times the deputies of kings also used to have their own thrones. Hence it is possible that Joseph made his parents and his brethren sit on his throne with Pharaoh’s permission.

The words خروا له سجدا do not mean that Joseph’s brothers and his parents fell prostrate before him. They only mean that they fell prostrate before God for Joseph i.e. they thanked God for raising Joseph to such an eminent

102. O my Lord, Thou hast bestowed power upon me and [a]taught me the interpretation of dreams. O [b]Maker of the heavens and the earth, Thou art my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Let death come to me in a state of submission *to Thy will* and join me to the righteous.'**1601**

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِيْ مِنْ
تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۟ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ
تَوَفَّنِيْ مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝١٠٢

103. [c]That is of the tidings of the unseen, which We reveal to

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمَا

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[a]12:7, 22. [b]6:15; 14:11; 35:2; 39:47. [c]3:45; 11:50.

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position. Thus, Joseph was the cause and not the object of their prostration. See also 2:35.

The verse also throws some light on the sublime morals of God's noble Prophets. Joseph's brothers had left their home in search of food, but he speaks of their coming to him as a special favour of God to himself.

Again, while mentioning God's favours he refers only to his being taken out of prison and makes no mention of being rescued from the well, lest his brothers might feel ashamed.

The word لطیف (Benignant) when applied to God, means, He Who takes care of His creatures through love or benevolence or Who benefits others with His love and kindness; He Who knows hidden things. See also 6:104.

1601. Commentary:

This verse bespeaks the great love which the righteous servants of God cherish for Him. Neither prosperity nor adversity can make them forget their Lord and Creator. Even amidst rejoicing at meeting with his parents and brothers after a long time, Joseph feels the flame of Divine love rising in his breast, and ignoring and forgetting all, he turns to his Lord and Master. It is this yearning of the human soul for God in which lies all spiritual progress. Without it outward acts of devotion are a mere shell without kernel.

The verse also shows how the lives of Prophets furnish strong proof of the attributes of God. This rise of Joseph from a state of utter helplessness to a position of great power and authority signified that God, as it were, created for him a new heaven and a new earth, thus providing evidence of the fact that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This is what is hinted at in the words, *O Maker of the heavens and the earth.*

thee. And thou wast not with them when they agreed upon their plan while they were plotting.1602	كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ اَجْمَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾
104. [a]And most men will not believe even though thou eagerly desire *it*.1603	وَمَآ اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾
105. And thou dost not ask of them any reward for it. *On the contrary*, [b]it is but *a source of* honour for all mankind.1604	وَمَا تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ ع

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[a] 18:7. [b] 38:88; 81:28.

1602. Commentary:

Having finished the life story of Joseph, the *Sūrah* beautifully turns to the people of Mecca, who were like brethren unto the Holy Prophet.

This verse thus makes it clear that this account of Joseph was not a mere story. It embodied mighty prophecies relating to the future of the Holy Prophet and of Islam, for, as pointed out in the course of comments on this chapter, many important events in the life of Joseph had their counterparts in the life of the Holy Prophet.

The word "they" in the clause, *while they were plotting*, refers not to the brothers of Joseph, but to the people of the Holy Prophet, who is told that what he had been listening to was "of the tidings of the unseen" embodying mighty prophecies over which no human being could have any control. These prophecies must, therefore, be regarded as emanating from God Who is the Knower of all secrets.

1603. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is told here that, despite his intense desire, it is so decreed that, like the brothers of Joseph, people would not believe in him unless they saw him rise to power and glory and themselves suffered humiliation and disgrace.

1604. Important Words:

ذکر (honour) means, remembrance; praise or eulogy; eminence or honour, etc. (Lane). See also 2:153.

Commentary:

The word ذکر having been used here in the sense of eminence and honour, the verse asks, why the people should take umbrage at the promises of greatness and glory given to the Holy Prophet, when, if they accept him, they are to share those blessings with him; and why, like the brothers of Joseph, should they think that the Holy Prophet's greatness would mean their own downfall? The verse thus implies another resemblance of the Holy Prophet with Joseph, inasmuch

R. 12.

106. [a]And how many a Sign is there in the heavens and the earth, which they pass by, turning away from it.**1605**

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾

107. And most of them believe not in Allah without *also* attributing partners *to Him.***1606**

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ
مُّشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾

108. Do they, then, feel secure from the coming on them of an overwhelming punishment from Allah [b]or the sudden coming of the Hour upon them while they are unaware?**1607**

اَفَاَمِنُوْٓا اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ
اللّٰهِ اَوْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ
لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾

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[a] 21:33; 23:67. [b] 10:51; 22:56; 43:67.

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as his people came to inherit power and glory through him, just as Joseph's brothers became honoured and respected through him.

1605. Commentary:

The verse points to a fundamental difference between the attitude of a believer and a disbeliever. Whereas the former goes about with his eyes open and is ready to grasp the slightest divine hint, the latter behaves like a blind man, refusing to benefit even from clear and manifest signs. Both of them are endowed with identical faculties and natural powers, but whereas the believer makes proper use of them, the disbeliever does not.

1606. Commentary:

This verse gives some causes of the unthinking and blind attitude of the disbelievers referred to in the preceding verse. This attitude is born of their anxiety and endeavour to explain away all divine signs in a polytheistic manner. They always try to ascribe the signs in favour of truth, the rapid progress and prosperity of believers and their own degradation and downfall to this or that cause, always declining to attribute these signs to the real cause i.e. to Divine help and succour which attends Prophets and their followers on all occasions.

1607. Important Words:

غاشية (an overwhelming punishment) is derived from غشى. They say, غشيه i.e. it covered or concealed him; it overcame or overwhelmed him, etc. غاشية means, a covering; a calamity or misfortune; a certain disease attacking the belly or the chest; a punishment that overwhelms and is general in its extent (Lane). See also 7:42.

109. Say, [a]'This is my way: I call unto Allah on sure knowledge, I and those who follow me. And Holy is Allah; and I am not of those who associate gods *with God.*'[1608]

قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِيْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۣ عَلٰى
بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ ۭ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ
وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝١٠٩

110. And [b]We sent not before thee *as Messengers* any but men, whom We inspired, from among the people of the towns. Have they not then travelled in the earth and seen what was the end of those before them? And surely, the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who fear *God*. Will you not then understand?[1609]

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ
اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى ۭ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا
فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ
لِّلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ۝١١٠

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[a] 6:58. [b] 16:44; 21:8.

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that as disbelievers refuse to accept anything but a sign of punishment, they will indeed have a sign of punishment. But as is the way of God, they will have smaller punishments before they are visited with the final or decisive one. And so it happened in the case of the Meccan idolaters. After a series of small reverses, Mecca, which was in those days temporarily the citadel of disbelief and infidelity, fell to the victorious arms of the Muslims. This was the decisive and real sign for which they had clamoured.

1608. Commentary:

In this verse the Holy Prophet is represented as saying that his wont is to benefit by the signs of God, to believe in Him alone, and to eschew all forms of idolatry, because he has received clear proof and sure knowledge from God. This shows that a blind and unthinking faith which is not based on sound arguments carries no weight. A true Muslim, like his Master, the Holy Prophet, should possess clear and irrefutable proofs and evidence to support and substantiate all his beliefs and doctrines. Mere hearsay or traditional belief is nothing.

1609. Commentary:

It is clear from this verse that only men, not women, can become Prophets. In fact, men and women have their specific spheres of work,

111. Till, [a]when the Messengers despaired *of the disbelievers* and they (the disbelievers) thought that they had been told a lie, Our help came to them, then was saved he whom We pleased. And Our chastisement cannot be averted from the sinful people.**1610**

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا اسۡتَيۡـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّهُمۡ
قَدۡ كُذِبُوۡا جَآءَهُمۡ نَصۡرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّىَ مَنۡ
نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاۡسُنَا عَنِ الۡقَوۡمِ
الۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾

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[a] 2:215.

the office of prophethood being outside the sphere of women. All other spiritual favours and blessings, however, are as open to women as to men.

The verse also warns disbelievers that their present pomp and power should not deceive them into thinking that they will indefinitely continue to enjoy these things. The time was fast approaching when their power and glory would depart and the people would see the truth and accept Islam. Their days would end in adversity and degradation, unlike those of the believers, whose condition would continue to improve, though sincere believers always enjoy perfect peace of mind even in adversity.

1610. Important Words:

كذبوا (they had been told a lie) is the passive plural from كذب (*kadhaba*) which means, he lied; or he uttered a falsehood; or he said what was untrue whether intentionally or unintentionally; he found his hopes to be false or vain. كذبه الحديث means, he gave him a false account of the thing and said what was untrue. They say كذب الرأى i.e. he imagined the thing contrary to its real state. An Arab would say كذبتك عينك i.e. thine eye showed thee that which had no reality i.e. thou wast deceived in the vision. They say كذبته نفسه i.e. his soul made him desire things and conceive hopes that did not come to pass. كذب الرجل (*kudhiba*) means, the man was told a lie or a falsehood or an untruth (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Like the preceding verse, the verse under comment speaks of both the Prophets and their opponents. The first sentence speaks of the Prophets of God, and the second of their enemies. The verse purports to say that the enemies of Prophets so continue to increase in wickedness and opposition to them that a stage is reached when the Prophets begin to think that those who were destined to believe had already believed and they despair of the rest. Their opponents, on the other hand, owing to the delay in the coming of Divine punishment, begin to feel secure in the thought that they will never be visited with any punishment and that the

112. Assuredly, in their narrative is a lesson for men of understanding. [a]It is not a thing

لَقَدۡ كَانَ فِيۡ قَصَصِهِمۡ عِبۡرَةٌ لِّاُولِي
الۡاَلۡبَابِ ؕ مَا كَانَ حَدِيۡثًا يُّفۡتَرٰى وَلٰكِنۡ

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[a] 10:38.

prophecies of the Prophets about their own final success and about the discomfiture of their enemies were so many pieces of falsehood. When matters come to such a pass, God's help comes to the Prophets and the leaders of disbelief are destroyed.

This is exactly what happens at the advent of every Prophet. The hour of final reckoning is delayed so long that disbelievers begin to have a false sense of security. Then God comes to the succour of His Prophets and makes their cause prevail.

The words, *when the Messengers despaired,* cannot be taken to mean that the Prophet despair of the help of God. This inference is obviously wrong and is belied by v. 88 of this very *Sūrah* wherein we have, *none despairs of Allah's mercy save the unbelieving people*. As a matter of fact, Prophets never despair of God's help. They only sometimes despair of their people believing in them, and this happens when the latter continue turning a deaf ear to their preaching.

Similarly, the words, *they thought that they had been told a lie*, do not mean that the Prophets thought so. The words only mean that their enemies thought so. The Prophets cannot entertain any doubt about the truth of their prophecies and of the promises of ultimate success made to them by God. Their faith in God is invincible; it stands on the firm rock of certitude. The pronoun "they" thus refers, not to the Prophets, but to their opponents mentioned in the previous verse. According to Arabic idiom it is allowable to use in the same sentence pronouns referring to different antecedents when the nouns to which they refer are clear from the context. But if the pronoun "they" be taken to refer to the Prophets, the sentence, *they thought that they had been told a lie*, would mean that wishful thinking and overconfidence in the help of God had made the Prophets interpret the Word of God containing promises of success in such a way as to believe in the very early triumph of their cause which, however, was not so ordained by God. Thus their own minds, as it were, lied to them or held out to them false hopes, by placing on the Word of God an interpretation which it did not bear.

The words, *they thought that they had been told a lie*, may also mean that the hopes that the Prophets had entertained about the repentance of their opponents turned out to be false. When at a certain stage the hostility of their opponents temporarily slackened, the Prophets began to entertain the hope that they would repent of their past misdeeds and would accept the truth, but that hope turned out to be a delusion. Taken in that has been forged, but a fulfilment of that which is before it and a detailed exposition of all things, and [a]a guidance and a mercy to a people who believe.**1611**

تَصۡدِيۡقَ الَّذِيۡ بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ وَتَفۡصِيۡلَ كُلِّ شَيۡءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحۡمَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ ع

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[a] 16:90.

this sense, these words also serve as an explanation of the words "the Messengers despaired." See the different meanings of the word كُذِبُوا under Important Words.

1611. Commentary:

This verse, which is the last one of the present *Sūrah*, means that a careful study of the histories of ancient Prophets leads one to the definite conclusion that the Holy Prophet is a true Messenger of God; for he not only bears a close resemblance to most of them, but in his person are fulfilled the prophecies of some of the previous Scriptures. If he be a liar or an impostor, these prophecies would prove to be false, for, if they are not taken as applying to the Holy Prophet there is no other person to whom they apply particularly when the Signs that were to appear at the advent of the Promised Prophet have already come to pass. This is what is hinted at in the words, *a fulfilment of that which is before it.*

The second reason given in this verse about the truth of the Holy Prophet is that the Book revealed to him fully satisfies all the needs and requirements of humanity, being *a detailed exposition of all things*. When such is the case, what purpose will any Law given to a Prophet in some future time serve? This argument throws overboard the claim of any person who should lay claim to having come with a new Law after the Holy Prophet.

Moreover, the Quran is also "a guidance" i.e. it is a book that not only guides man to truth but also leads and guides him in all the different stages of his moral and spiritual development, till his faith which is at first based only on reason and common sense becomes converted into absolute conviction through personal experience. In this connection see the meaning of هدى under 1:6. The Quran goes even further, in that its followers not only attain nearness to God but also become recipients of Divine "mercy" when they find the light of God actually descending on them and see God’s help and assistance attending them in all their undertakings.

CHAPTER 13

AR-RA‘D

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The preponderance of scholarly opinion is in favour of this *Sūrah* having been revealed at Mecca. Its subject matter also confirms this view. There are, however, some verses which, according to some authorities, were revealed at Medina. These verses are 44th (according to ‘Aṭā) 32nd (according to Qatāda), and 13-15th (according to certain other authorities).

In chapter 10 (*Sūrah* Yūnus) we were told that whenever a Prophet appears in the world, God makes use of two kinds of means to lead men to the right path, viz. (1) by punishing them and (2) by showing mercy to them. Stress was laid in chapter 11 (*Sūrah* Hūd) on Divine punishment and in chapter 12 (*Sūrah* Yūsuf) on God’s mercy. The present *Sūrah*, however, explains how the promises and prophecies about the rise and prosperity of the Holy Prophet made in the three preceding chapters will be fulfilled and how Islam eventually will be made to prevail over other religions.

Subject Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the theme that God works in inscrutable ways. The means by which His Messengers and Prophets rise to power remain hidden from human eyes till the results, towards the accomplishment of which they work, become apparent. It proceeds to draw our attention to a well-known law of nature that different kinds of fruit and vegetation grow from the same soil which is watered by the same water. Similarly, the Holy Prophet, being born and brought up in the same environment with the pagan Meccans, rose to be God’s great Messenger. The disbelievers are further told that they should not judge the Prophet by his present weakness and the paucity of his means and resources nor should they wonder at the promises of his ultimate success. It is not his promised success that is to be wondered at; rather, it would have been a wonder if he had not come at this time of humanity’s crying need. The Prophet is bound to succeed and his enemies must fail. The cause of Islam will triumph by the children of the leaders of disbelief themselves joining its fold. God will withdraw His help from them and their power and glory will depart. All the laws and elements of nature being under God’s control, He will make them subservient to the Holy Prophet’s cause. The false gods of the idolaters will be quite powerless to impede or arrest the progress of the new Faith.

The *Sūrah* goes on to develop the theme that so great are the spiritual powers of the Holy Prophet that he can overcome his enemies single-handedly even as a man having eyes can overcome a host of blind men. Polytheism cannot stand against the doctrine of the Unity of God, nor can the votaries of false gods against the devotees of the True God. The enemies of truth will melt and vanish like foam or froth. Men of weak understanding see only the rising foam or froth but do not care to see the gold or pure water underneath. The foam and froth disappear and pure water and gold remain. Similarly, the superficial and trifling beliefs of the polytheists are bound to perish and the great and noble ideals preached by the Quran will endure and its teachings, being in harmony with human nature, will make their way into the hearts of men. They will gradually come to realize on which side lies the truth when they compare the moral stature of the believers with that of the disbelievers. Mighty signs will be shown and great miracles wrought by means of the Quran and human hearts, the strongest of all earthly citadels, shall fall. One of these signs will be that the Meccans will drive out the Holy Prophet from Mecca and will draw the sword against him. But Islam shall continue to make headway till Mecca, the centre of disbelief and opposition to Islam, shall fall to the victorious arms of the Holy Prophet. Idolatry shall disappear from Arabia for all time and Islam shall be firmly established there. The world shall witness all these signs wrought not by human agency but by the hands of the Almighty God Himself. The *Sūrah* contains many prophecies about the discomfiture and destruction of the leaders of disbelief and foretells a bright future for Islam.

The Title

The above constitutes the main theme of the *Sūrah* and it is in conformity with this theme that it has been named Ra‘d or Thunder. Rain brings with it lightning and thunder and it is in the fitness of things that heavenly rain—the Quranic revelation—should also have been accompanied by thunder and lightning. Islam has brought with it thunderbolts. Those who draw the sword against Islam shall perish by the sword and those who owe allegiance to it shall sit on the thrones of power and glory. This is why the *Sūrah* has fitly been called Ra‘d or Thunder.

اٰیَاتُہَا ٤٤ سُوۡرَۃُ الرَّعۡدِ مَکِّیَّۃٌ ١٣ رُکُوۡعَاتُہَا ٦

(AR-RA‘D)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.**1612**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ﴿١﴾

2. [b]Alif Lām Mīm Rā. [c]These are verses of the Book. And that which has been revealed to thee from thy Lord is the truth, but most men believe not.**1613**

الٓـمّٓرٰ ۟ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ ؕ وَ الَّذِیۡۤ
اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡکَ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ الۡحَقُّ وَ لٰکِنَّ
اَکۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿٢﴾

3. [d]Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then He settled Himself on the Throne.

اَللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَیۡرِ عَمَدٍ
تَرَوۡنَہَا ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰی عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ وَ سَخَّرَ

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[a]See 1:1. [b]See 2:2. [c]13:20; 32:3-4. [d]31:11.

1612. Commentary:

See under 1:1.

1613. Commentary:

Whereas chapters 2, 3 & 7 began with the abbreviated letters *Alif Lām Mīm* (chapter 7 beginning with *Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād*) and chapters 10, 11 & 12 began with the letters *Alif Lām Rā*, the present *Sūrah* which is the 13th in number opens with the letters, *Alif Lām Mīm Rā*. This difference in the abbreviated letters shows that the subject matter of this *Sūrah* varies a little from that of the three preceding chapters. These four letters stand for the words انا الله اعلم وارى i.e. I am Allah, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing, the attribute of "Knowing" having been added to that of "Seeing" referred to in the preceding *Sūrahs*. It is obvious that when the attributes of "knowing" and "seeing" are used about God, they signify much more than what such words mean when used about man. God’s sight and knowledge are unlimited both as regards depth and extensiveness.

The words, *These are verses of the Book*, mean: (a) these are verses of the Book which mankind were instinctively expecting to be given; or (b) these are verses of the Book which had been promised in previous Scriptures. It is impossible successfully to withstand and oppose such a Book.

The latter part of the verse means that man by nature hankers after true knowledge, but it is surprising that when disbelievers have actually been given a book comprising the truth, they prefer to grope in doubt and darkness rather than accept it.

[a]And He pressed the sun and the moon into service: each pursues its course until an appointed term. [b]He regulates *all* affairs. He clearly explains the Signs that you may have a firm belief in the meeting with your Lord.1614

الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡ لِاَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ؕ يُدَبِّرُ الۡاَمۡرَ يُفَصِّلُ الۡاٰيٰتِ
لَعَلَّكُمۡ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمۡ تُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ③

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[a]7:55; 16:13; 29:62; 31:30; 35:14; 39:6. [b]32:6.

1614. Commentary:

The Arabic expression رفع السموات بغير عمد ترونها rendered as, *Who raised up the heavens without any pillars that you can see*, means: (1) you see that the heavens stand without pillars; or (2) the heavens do not stand on any pillars which you may see, i.e. they have supports but you cannot see them. Both these meanings are correct and agree with the sense of the text. If the word عمد (pillars) be taken in its ordinary sense, i.e. in the sense of material columns which bear the weight of other things, then the verse would mean that the heavens stand without the support of pillars. But if the word be taken in the figurative sense, i.e. in the sense of anything that helps to keep another thing in place, then the verse would mean that the heavens or, for that matter, the heavenly bodies do stand on supports but these supports are not visible to the human eye, e.g. the force of gravity, or magnetic power or the special movements of planets or other means which men of science have discovered so far or which may be discovered in future.

The verse seeks to disabuse the minds of disbelievers of the notion that because the Holy Prophet possessed no material support or means which are considered essential for success, therefore he could not succeed in his mission. The verse says that it is not necessary that all things should have material supports or that these supports should be visible to the human eye. It is, indeed, true that everything must have some sort of prop to support it; but all things need not have the same kind of support. Material things which are the result of man's handiwork need material supports, for even a small roof cannot stand without walls or pillars. But such is God's handiwork that heavy stars stand in their places without visible support or without any support which may be called "a pillar" in the ordinary sense of the word. Although long ages have passed since this system came into being, yet nothing has gone wrong with it. There lies a world of difference between the way in which God works and the working of man. Man cannot do without support but God can, and this is why He has caused millions of stars to stand in their places without support or at least without visible support. The

4. And [a]He it is Who spread out the earth and made therein mountains and rivers. And [b]fruit of every kind He made therein in two sexes. [c]He causes the night to cover the day. Therein, verily, are Signs for a people who reflect.[1615]

وَهُوَ الَّذِیۡ مَدَّ الۡاَرۡضَ وَجَعَلَ فِیۡهَا
رَوَاسِیَ وَاَنۡهٰرًا ؕ وَمِنۡ کُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ
فِیۡهَا زَوۡجَیۡنِ اثۡنَیۡنِ یُغۡشِی الَّیۡلَ النَّهَارَ ؕ
اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّتَفَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾

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[a]15:20; 16:16; 21:32. [b]36:37; 51:50. [c]7:55; 39:6.

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same divine law operates in the spiritual realm. When God desires to make a man succeed, He needs no material or visible means for it. He works in subtle ways that remain hidden from human gaze till the end is reached; and that which man in his ignorance regards as impossible becomes possible.

The expression, *Then He settled Himself on the Throne*, means that just as God first created the celestial bodies without any visible support and then began to manifest His attributes in a perfect manner, similarly in the spiritual world He has brought to perfection the spiritual firmament through the Holy Prophet; and now through the perfect teaching given to him, God's attributes are going to find their complete manifestation. The word عرش or Throne, for which see 7:55, is used in the Quran to express the bringing to perfection of spiritual or physical laws. The expression is analogous to the ways of worldly monarchs. The rulers and monarchs of this world make their important proclamations "from the throne." To keep up the metaphor the clause, *He settled Himself on the Throne*, is intended to express the perfect manifestation of Divine attributes, meaning thereby that when a new spiritual heaven and a new earth have come into being, Divine attributes will necessarily find their requisite manifestation. See also 10:4.

The words, *pressed the sun and the moon into service*, mean that God has not only caused the heavenly bodies to stand without the support of pillars, but has also subjected them to the service of man. Man's paid servants may, and indeed sometimes do, shirk their duty, but these heavenly bodies, in obedience to divine laws, serve us with perfect regularity and faithfulness. What wonder then if God should have enforced the same inexorable law in favour of the Holy Prophet and should have subjected everything to his service?

The expression, *He regulates all affairs*, is also intended to signify that God will make all things serve the cause of the Prophet. The whole universe will, as it were, become his servant.

1615. Commentary:

This verse points to the law of nature that heaven and earth work in unison and this harmonious co-operation of the celestial and terrestrial bodies is responsible for the successful working of the universe. For instance, when rain falls from heaven the earth brings forth its vegetation which is thus the common result of both heaven and earth. The same law works in the spiritual universe, for just as there is a heaven and an earth in the material world there is also a spiritual heaven and a spiritual earth. Rain and light come down from the spiritual heaven, and the spiritual earth becomes enlightened and revived into a new life. Just as good soil cannot fail to yield its treasures after the descent of rain, similarly, unsullied human nature cannot withhold its treasures after the descent of heavenly water which is Divine revelation. God's Prophets attract men as a magnet attracts iron. There was therefore, no cause for wonder if Islam spread quickly. The wonder would have been if it had not spread so fast, because then one would have been entitled to ask why the soil did not bring forth its verdure and herbage when rain had fallen at the proper time.

The verse refers to another important natural law, viz. God has made in the earth mountains which keep water stored up in the form of snow which, on melting, feeds rivers and springs. If the store of snow on the tops of mountains were exhausted, rivers and springs would be dried up and the land would lie dry and desolate. An analogous law operates in the spiritual world. In the spiritual realm certain individuals are like mountains and serve as reservoirs, storing up the Word of God, while certain other individuals are like rivers and springs which water the world but cannot keep the water stored up. Prophets are the mountains of the spiritual world, while savants and ulema, learned in religious lore, are its rivers and springs, and the common people provide the soil which these rivers and springs, being themselves fed by the melted snow of the mountains, water and make fertile. Should these mountains disappear, there would be no springs and no rivers and the earth would dry up and be ruined.

Though the present verse refers only to fruits, elsewhere the Quran speaks of God having made pairs—male and female—of all things (36:37; 51:50). This is a truth which of all religious Scriptures the Quran was the first to propound. It is true that even in pre-Islamic days the Arabs had discovered that the date trees were male and female, but they could go no further. It was the Quran that made known to the world the great truth that all fruit-trees, in fact, everything, had male and female. The people could not at first understand it. But now, after a lapse of 1350 years, scientific research has confirmed the Quranic announcement and scientists have begun to discover pairs even in inorganic matter.

The verse draws our attention to the fact that the law that everything has a pair applies to the human intellect also. Until heavenly light descends on

5. [a]And in the earth are *diverse* tracts, adjoining one another, and gardens of vines, and corn-fields, and date-palms, growing together from one root and others not so growing; they are watered with the same water, [b]yet We make some of them excel others in fruit. Therein are Signs for a people who understand.**1616**

وَفِي الْاَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجٰوِرٰتٌ وَّجَنّٰتٌ
مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّزَرْعٌ وَّنَخِيْلٌ صِنْوَانٌ
وَّغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُّسْقٰى بِمَآءٍ وَّاحِدٍ ۚ قف
وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِي الْاُكُلِ ط
اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ۝

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[a]6:100; 16:12. [b]16:14; 39:22.

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it, man cannot have true knowledge, which is born of a combination of Divine revelation and human reason. So it is impossible to have true knowledge of God independently of the revelation sent to the Holy Prophet. Similarly, human reason cannot fail to accept the Word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet if it is presented to it in a proper manner.

The words, *He causes the night to cover the day*, point to yet another fundamental law of nature that the night serves as a covering for the day, and by pointing to this law the Quran dispels the popular misconception that the light of the Quran could not spread amidst the prevailing impenetrable veil of darkness. Just as the darkness of night is removed to give place to the light of the day, similarly, the present darkness of sin and iniquity will be followed by the spiritual light of truth and righteousness. Darkness, in fact, possesses no independent existence and a single ray of the sun dispels and dissipates it. The Sun of Islam will now dispel the darkness of unbelief and infidelity.

1616. Important Words:

متجاورات (adjoining one another) is derived from تجاور which is derived from جاور which again is derived from جار which means, he or it declined or deviated. جاوره means, he became his neighbour or he lived near him; he confined himself in a mosque, etc., occupying himself in prayer and religious meditation. تجاوروا means, they became mutual neighbours or they lived near together (Lane).

صنوان (growing together from one root) is the plural of صنو. They say اصنى النخل i.e. the palm-trees had pairs or triplets or more growing together from single roots. صنو means, one of a pair or of three or of more palm-trees or of any trees growing from one root; each being called the صنو of the other. The word also means, a brother by the same father or the same mother. The Holy Prophet is reported

6. [a]And if thou dost wonder, then wondrous indeed is their saying: ‘What! when we have become dust, shall we then be in a state of new creation?’ These it is who disbelieve in their Lord; and [b]these it is who

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَإِذَا كُنَّا
تُرٰبًا ءَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۬ أُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ
الْأَغْلٰلُ فِيٓ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ

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[a]27:68; 37:17; 50:4. [b]36:9; 76:5.

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to have said, عم الرجل صنو ابيه i.e. the paternal uncle of the man is the صنو of his father (Takmilah fīṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ) meaning that the stock of both is one. The Quranic words صنوان و غير صنوان mean, palm-trees having one root and others having separate roots (Lane).

الاكل (fruit) is derived from اكل (*akala*). They say اكله i.e. he ate it. اكل (*akl*) which is the noun-infinitive means, the act of eating. اكل (*ukul*) means, what is eaten; any eatable; food; fruit; means of subsistence or ample means of subsistence; worldly good fortune; intelligence; judgement; firmness of intellect (Lane).

Commentary:

Disbelievers are told here that they should not think that, because the Holy Prophet is one of them and belongs to the same stock as they, he enjoyed no superiority over them. Do they not see, the verse says, that adjoining tracts of the same land possess different capacities and properties and produce different kinds of produce? A certain tract of land, for instance, grows one thing while the piece adjacent to it cannot grow it. Similarly, trees of one stock or one species growing in the same garden, not unoften, grow fruits of different quality. Why cannot the same thing happen among human beings?

The expression, *they are watered with the same water*, signifies that when trees watered with the same water bear fruits vastly different in taste and colour, why cannot the Holy Prophet, even though he lives in the same town and among the same people, excel them, especially when he is nourished in the elixir of Divine revelation and his opponents are brought up under the inspiration of Satan? The words also point to the fact that the same means employed by persons of different capabilities often produce different results. A sword in the hands of a person who does not know its use will be quite a different weapon in the hands of a seasoned and skilful warrior. So the superiority of the Holy Prophet over his opponents lies not only in his superior capacities but also in the way he makes use of the means at his disposal. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar were ordinary citizens of Mecca who would have ended their days in oblivion but the magic touch of the Holy Prophet lifted them to the highest pinnacles of usefulness and glory.

shall have shackles round their necks, and they shall be the inmates of the Fire, wherein they shall abide.1617

اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمۡ فِیۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾

7. [a]And they want thee to hasten on the punishment in preference to good, whereas exemplary punishments have *already* occurred before them. And, [b]verily, thy Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind despite their wrongdoing, and verily, thy Lord is *also* strict in condign punishment.1618

وَ یَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَکَ بِالسَّیِّئَۃِ قَبۡلَ الۡحَسَنَۃِ
وَ قَدۡ خَلَتۡ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمُ الۡمَثُلٰتُ ؕ وَ اِنَّ
رَبَّکَ لَذُوۡ مَغۡفِرَۃٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلٰی ظُلۡمِهِمۡ ۚ
وَ اِنَّ رَبَّکَ لَشَدِیۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿۷﴾

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[a]22:48; 29:54-55. [b]41:44; 53:33.

1617. Commentary:

This verse purports to say that it is no matter of wonder that God should have granted such miraculous success to the Holy Prophet and should have brought about moral and spiritual reformation through him. What really would be a subject for wonder would be that the world should become corrupt and God should take no steps to reform it or that disbelievers could not rise to a new life after having fallen spiritually. When the water of life comes, death must depart.

The words, *these it is who shall have shackles round their necks, and they shall be the inmates of the Fire*, contain a warning that those who despair of the grace of God must burn in the fire of regret and remorse and those who reject and abandon the ways of God in favour of their self-devised plans and schemes, which are like so many shackles round their necks, must come to grief. It is a pity, however, that instead of turning their attention to the propagation of Islam and prayer and spiritual regeneration, present-day Muslims insist on legalizing interest and insurance policies, etc.

1618. Important Words:

المثلات (exemplary punishments) is the plural of المثلة which is derived from مثل. They say مثل فلان فلانا i.e. he became like such a one. مثل بفلان means, he punished such a one in an exemplary manner. مثلة means, calamity; punishment serving as a warning to others; punishment which visited past generations and which served as a warning for others (Aqrab).

العقاب (condign punishment) is derived from عاقب which is derived from عقب (*‘aqaba*). They say عقبه i.e.

8. [a]And those who disbelieve say, ‘Wherefore has not a Sign been sent down to him from his Lord?’ [b]Thou art, surely, a Warner. And there is a Guide for every people.[1619]

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ
وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ع ﴿۸﴾ ١ ع ٧

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[a]6:38; 10:21. [b]11:13; 35:24.

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he struck his heel; he came after him (as though at his heels). عاقبه means, he did a thing with him alternately, each taking his turn; he punished him as denoting consequence or retribution. عقب (*‘aqib*) means, the heel or the hinder part of the human foot. العقاب means, requital or punishment that is awarded as a result of some offence or sin (Lane & Aqrab). Hence in the text it has rightly been rendered as "condign punishment."

Commentary:

The verse refers to an evil practice of disbelievers. When they are told that if they do not remove their shackles and do not avail themselves of the guidance of God and if they persist in their wicked ways, they will become like a piece of dry wood, which is thrown into the fire, they hasten to demand where that fire is. So, instead of soliciting God’s mercy these unfortunate people invoke His punishment. The advent of every Prophet of God is attended by both God’s mercy and His punishment but wicked people invariably demand the latter.

The words, *verily, thy Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind despite their wrongdoing*, set forth the great truth that the purpose of God in sending Prophets is not to destroy men, but to save them. This is why He continues to forgive them, despite their persistence in wrongdoing. But this repeated forgiveness does not mean that the wicked will never be punished. If they do not give up their evil ways, they will not escape God’s punishment. They will indeed be given every opportunity to reform themselves; but if they persistently refuse to do so, Divine punishment will finally descend on them.

The words, *thy Lord is strict in condign punishment*, do not mean that God makes use of severity in inflicting punishment but that the punishment inflicted by God is severer and more painful than that inflicted by men.

1619. Important Words:

انما (surely) is a compound of ان (*inna*) and ما (*mā*) and generally gives the sense of "only." Sometimes it is used in the sense of "verily, certainly or surely" (Tāj). See also 6:110.

Commentary:

A study of the Quran makes it clear that whenever disbelievers demand a sign, they invariably mean the sign of

R. 2.

9. [a]Allah knows what every female bears, and what the wombs diminish and what they cause to grow. [b]And with Him everything has a *proper* measure.1620

اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ اُنْثٰى وَمَا تَغِيْضُ الْاَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ ؕ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهٗ بِمِقْدَارٍ ۝۹

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[a]35:12; 41:48. [b]15:22.

punishment, unless the context points to some other meaning. This is why disbelievers are here depicted as saying, *Wherefore has not a sign been sent down to him*, as if the many signs already shown to them were no signs at all. In reply to this foolish demand they are told that it is clear from the very title of the Prophet—a Warner—that punishment will at last surely overtake disbelievers; but before it comes upon them, they will be given ample opportunities to benefit by the guidance the Prophet has brought because he is also a guide for them.

1620. Important Words:

تغیض (diminish) is derived from غاض which means, it (water) became scanty and sank into the earth; or it (flow of milk or price of a commodity, etc.) decreased or diminished or became deficient. The Quranic expression ما تغیض الارحام means, the wombs falling short of completion so that the foetus dies. The Arabs say غاض الکرام و فاض اللئام i.e. the generous became few or perished and the mean became many. غاض is also used transitively meaning he made (water, etc.) to become scanty; to decrease or diminish (Lane).

Commentary:

In v. 4 we were told that all things in the universe have pairs and that in the spiritual world also some individuals act like males and others like females, the former exercising influence and the latter receiving it. In the verse under comment the Quran intends to point out that in the person of the Holy Prophet there has appeared one who is spiritually a male and that nobody can attain any spiritual rank without receiving his stamp or being influenced by him. The words, *Allah knows what every female bears, and what the wombs diminish and what they cause to grow*, mean that God knows well the natural capacities and aptitudes of the Holy Prophet's people, and whether they will accept divine or satanic influence and which influence will grow and which will decline. The verse hints that those who accept the Holy Prophet and receive his stamp will grow and increase in power, influence and numbers, natural capacities and talents, while his opponents will decline and decrease till their physical and spiritual progeny will be destroyed altogether. Taken in the physical sense, the verse

10. [a]*He is the* Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Incomparably Great, the Most High.[1621]

عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الۡكَبِيۡرُ الۡمُتَعَالِ ⑩

11. He among you who conceals *his* word, and he who utters it openly are equal *in His sight*; and *also* he who hides by night, and he who goes forth *openly* by day.[1622]

سَوَآءٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ اَسَرَّ الۡقَوۡلَ وَمَنۡ جَهَرَ
بِهٖ وَمَنۡ هُوَ مُسۡتَخۡفٍۭ بِالَّيۡلِ وَسَارِبٌۢ
بِالنَّهَارِ ⑪

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[a] 6:74; 9:94; 59:23; 64:19.

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means that only God knows what will become of future generations of disbelievers. Their future generations will accept Islam and their females will bear only such children as are destined to become servants of the Holy Prophet. And this proved to be actually the case. By far the greater part of the younger generation of the Meccans, and for that matter of other Arab tribes, accepted the Holy Prophet, to the great chagrin of their fathers whose tyranny and persecution could not prevent them from embracing Islam.

1621. Important Words:

الكبير (the Incomparably Great). See 11:4. The difference between الكبير (the Incomparably Great) and المتعال (the Most High) is that whereas the former word expresses the greatness of God in relation to human beings, the latter expresses His absolute eminence independently of any relationship with human beings.

Commentary:

The verse implies the hint that in order to checkmate and frustrate the plans of the enemy and to achieve success against him it is necessary to know his plans, both open and secret. The adversaries of the Holy Prophet are warned that they have to deal with a Being Who has full knowledge of their plans and Who, being Great, can easily foil and frustrate them. But being also High, His plans to bring about their ruin are hidden from them. How can they then hope to succeed against His Prophet and Messenger?

1622. Commentary:

The enemies of the Holy Prophet employed two kinds of plans to bring about his defeat. Sometimes they publicly threatened him with destruction, and at other times they hatched secret plots against him. Sometimes they attacked him in broad daylight and sometimes they attacked him in the darkness of the night. In reply to all these foul attempts the Quran warns the Prophet’s enemies that by offering opposition to him they are really

12. For him (the Messenger) is a succession *of angels* before him and behind him; they guard him by the command of Allah. Surely, [a]Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts. And when Allah wishes to punish a people, there is no repelling it, nor have they any helper beside Him.**1623**

لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ
يَحْفَظُوْنَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ
مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ
وَاِذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوْٓءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ ۚ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّالٍ ﴿١٢﴾

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[a] 8:54.

opposing God. Their overt or covert plans against him cannot succeed because God, Who knows all their secret and open designs, is his Helper and Protector.

1623. Important Words:

معقبات (a succession of angels) is the plural of معقب which is derived from عقب (*‘aqaba*). They say عقبه i.e. he came after him, as though at his heels; or he followed him closely or he succeeded him. عقب بغزاة بعد غزاة (*‘aqqaba*) means, he followed up one expedition with another. عقب فى الامر means, he went repeatedly to and fro; or he made repeated efforts to accomplish the affair: striving or exerting himself. معقب means, he who or that which comes after another. ملك معقب means, an angel that follows another. المعقبات means, the angels of the night and the day because they succeed one another by turns (the feminine form is used because of the frequency of their doing so, since in Arabic the feminine form is sometimes employed to impart emphasis and frequency as in علامة); utterance of سبحان الله and الحمد لله and الله اكبر repeated after Prayers. معقب also signifies one who makes warring expeditions repeatedly and does not stay with his family after his return; one who seeks after a thing repeatedly, striving or exerting himself; one who puts off or repels the payment of what is due from him (Lane).

Commentary:

The pronoun "him" in the words "for him" in the beginning of the verse refers to the Holy Prophet and the verse means that, like worldly kings, God has appointed body-guards for the Holy Prophet. This meaning is supported by the several unsuccessful attempts that were made on his life and the protection that God vouchsafed to him amidst the many mortal dangers which surrounded him. His life was constantly in danger, both at Mecca and Medina, but he remained safe because he enjoyed Divine protection, being

13. [a]He it is Who shows you the lightning to inspire fear and hope, and He raises the heavy clouds.**1624**

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُرِیۡکُمُ الۡبَرۡقَ خَوۡفًا وَّ طَمَعًا
وَّ یُنۡشِیُٔ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ۚ﴿۱۳﴾

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[a] 30:25.

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guarded by angels and his own devoted Companions. The word معقبات rendered here as "a succession of angles" may refer both to the celestial beings in heaven and to the devoted Companions of the Holy Prophet who so eagerly guarded him with their lives.

The pronoun "him" may also have a wider application, meaning, every person. In this case, the verse would mean that God has appointed guardian angels for the protection of every person. He is exposed every moment to various kinds of dangers; for instance, innumerable harmful germs enter his body with every breath but God has provided the antidote in his very system and the germs very often fail to do him any harm. In diverse other ways also, man is providentially protected from dangers that assail him without his ever knowing of them.

If applied to disbelievers, the verse would imply a warning to them that if they did not desist from their evil ways, God would withdraw His protection from them and they would perish.

The words, *Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts*, do not mean that God shows no mercy or favour to the sinful and the wicked. It only means that He does not change His attitude of kindness and benignity to those of His servants who have earned His favour by good works, unless they effect a change in themselves and forsake the path of virtue and take to evil. The verse thus hints that when a people are visited with successive afflictions which drive them to ruin and destruction, that is a sure sign that they have become morally and spiritually degenerate.

1624. Commentary:

Lightning inspires people both with fear and hope. It inspires fear because sometimes men die of it and embryos and certain plants get hurt. It also brings hope to men, for it heralds fertilizing rain. It also helps to destroy germs of different diseases and thus serves to put an end to epidemics. Similarly, heavy clouds serve a twofold purpose. Very often they come as a mercy, because they bring much-needed rain. But they also cause floods resulting in death and destruction. Disbelievers are told in this verse that they should not feel proud of their possessions and power or of their kith and kin for, like lightning and heavy rain, these things cut both ways. While they are the source of happiness and honour for some, they cause the spiritual undoing of others. The similitude of heavy rain and lightning points to the supreme moral lesson that the primary thing is goodness of heart

14. And the thunder glorifies Him with His praise [a]and *likewise do* the angels for awe of Him; and [b]He sends the thunderbolts, and smites therewith whom He wills, yet they dispute concerning Allah, while He is severe in punishing.**1625**

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيْفَتِهٖ ۚ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ ۚ وَهُوَ شَدِيْدُ الْمِحَالِ ۗ﴿١٤﴾

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[a]16:51; 42:6. [b]24:44.

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and not the possession of worldly riches and material prosperity; for, without goodness of heart these things may, instead of proving useful to the people who possess them, prove their ruin.

1625. Important Words:

محال (punishment) is derived from ماحل which is again derived from محل. They say محل البلد i.e. the town had no rain and became affected with drought and dearth. ماحله means, he devised a plan or hatched a plot against him; he showed enmity towards him, the other doing the same in return. محال means, plan or device; power or might; quarrel or disputation; enmity; punishment or torment; severity; destruction (Aqrab).

Commentary:

Disbelievers are here told that they should give up hugging the fond hope that the present afflictions and trials of Muslims (hinted at in the words "thunders" and "thunderbolts") would bring about the latter’s ruin. Not all lightning is destructive nor are all clouds the source of unmixed good. Their afflictions cannot bring about the ruin of believers. On the contrary, they will bring about their moral and spiritual advancement, for they bring into play their hidden faculties and bring them nearer to God. Thunder and lightning are after all the creation of God and are meant to glorify Him. They cannot therefore, cause the destruction of God’s faithful servants, whom He has promised to protect, for that would be against His glorification. So existing thunders and the dark clouds of temporary miseries and tribulations only contribute to the progress and prosperity of the Faithful.

The verse further points out that thunder and clouds are under the control of God’s angels, who are the first cause, and have been created to serve and advance the cause of God’s Messengers. Why then, should the believers fear the thunder and clouds of adversity that are now bursting upon them? They would only destroy those who seek to frustrate the purpose of God. The words, *they dispute concerning Allah,* are intended to point out that it is no law of nature that is being discussed here

15. Unto Him is the true prayer. [a]And those on whom they call beside Him answer them not at all, except as he *is answered* who stretches forth his two hands toward water that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not. [b]And the prayer of the disbelievers is but a thing wasted.[1626]

لَهٗ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِیْنَ یَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ
دُوْنِهٖ لَا یَسْتَجِیْبُوْنَ لَهُمْ بِشَیْءٍ اِلَّا
كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّیْهِ اِلَی الْمَآءِ لِیَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا
هُوَ بِبَالِغِهٖ ؕ وَمَا دُعَآءُ الْكٰفِرِیْنَ اِلَّا
فِیْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿۱۵﴾

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[a]35:14; 40:21. [b]40:51.

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but a prophecy of punishment for disbelievers.

The words شديد المحال (severe in punishing) may also be rendered as "strong in planning" thus hinting that God is not only severe in punishing but it is also impossible to frustrate His plans.

1626. Commentary:

The Quranic expression له دعوة الحق rendered in the text as, *Unto Him is the true prayer*, may be translated in several ways (1) God alone is worthy of worship; (2) it is praying to God alone that can be useful or beneficial for man; (3) the voice of God alone rises in support of truth i.e. the teaching which is really true and useful for man and is free from defects and untruths can come from God alone; (4) the Voice of God alone must prevail i.e. no one can frustrate God’s purpose and stand in His way; for the word حق (true) also means, that which prevails and becomes established.

The words, *except as he is answered who stretches forth his two hands toward water that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not*, embody a great principle. Just as he who ascribes lower status to a higher thing remains deprived of its higher benefits, similarly, he who ascribes higher status to a lower thing deprives himself of its true benefits. The man who looks upon a spurious coin as a genuine one will practically suffer as much as he who unwittingly treats a genuine coin as a spurious one. Idolaters think that their gods will answer their prayers and come to their help, but they can never do so.

In like manner, those who ascribe divine powers to things created by God deprive themselves of even their limited uses. How can those who look upon fire and water as gods think of bringing them under their control? And how can those who look upon Prophets as gods derive from them the real good which they could derive from them by following them as heavenly Messengers?

The verse thus says that the right

16. And to Allah submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and *likewise do* their shadows, in the mornings and the evenings.1627

وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
طَوْعًا وَّ كَرْهًا وَّ ظِلٰلُهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ
وَالْاٰصَالِ ۩ ⑯ السجدة

way to succeed in life is to put all things in their proper places, to give God the status which is His due and to stars, rivers and mountains the position which they rightly possess. Whereas we should worship God, pray to Him and seek His blessings, we should subject created things to our service and derive those benefits from them which the Wise God has placed in them. That alone is the way of success and true happiness.

The words, *the prayer of the disbelievers is but a thing wasted*, mean that all prayers of disbelievers addressed to false deities will prove fruitless.

1627. Important Words:

ظلال (shadows) is the plural of both ظل (*ẓill*) and ظلة (*ẓullah*), which are derived from ظل (*ẓalla*). They say ظل اليوم i.e. the day became shady. ظل الشیء means, the thing became long or extended. ظلله means, he shaded him. اظله means, it cast its shade upon him; or he took him into his shelter or protection. ظل means, the light of the sun without the rays; shade; blackness of the night; an apparition or phantom or a thing that one sees like a shadow; a covering; might or power of resistance protection or shelter; person or corporeal form or figure which one sees from a distance. The Arabs say السلطان ظل الله فی الارض i.e. the sovereign is God's means of protection or defence (or His representative) in the earth. In ḥadīth we read الکافر یسجد لغیر اللّٰه و ظله یسجد للّٰه ای جسمه i.e. an infidel prostrates himself before deities other than God but his ظل viz. his body, prostrates itself before God (meaning that his body is subject to divine law). ظلة means, anything that shades or covers or protects one (Lane & Biḥār).

الغدو (mornings) is the plural of غدوة meaning, morning or early part of the forenoon (Lane).

الآصال (evenings) is the plural of اصيل which means, evening; time from the عصر (late afternoon) Prayer to sunset. The word also means, having root or foundation; rooted, fixed, stable or permanent; having lineage or pedigree (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse embodies a great truth. It says that all creation whether in the heavens or on the earth obeys or is bound to obey God-made laws of nature, willingly or unwillingly. The tongue must perform the function of tasting and the ear the function of hearing. This obedience to the laws of nature may be called compulsory. But then man is also given a certain freedom of action where he can use his volition and discretion. A hungry man chooses to eat to satisfy his hunger; another man goes about sight-seeing. Both these persons are free in what they do; but even in actions in which they appear to have been granted freedom, they are subject to a certain amount of compulsion, because they must obey God’s laws in whatever they do, willingly or unwillingly. It is to this point that the verse refers.

Figuratively, the verse also hints at the subtle ways in which God was helping the Holy Prophet. Certain things happened over which the disbelievers had no control but which were meant to help the cause of Islam. The Fall of Mecca, for example, helped to subjugate the whole of Arabia to the Holy Prophet, but the disbelievers could not prevent it. On the other hand, the terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyyah were dictated by the disbelievers. They thought that these terms would bring disgrace to Muslims and that the cause of Islam would thereby suffer. But the treaty proved a blessing in disguise for the Muslims. Similarly, the Meccans forced the Holy Prophet to flee from Mecca and rejoiced to think that they had succeeded in driving Islam out of its Centre, but by doing so they dug their own grave and laid the foundation of the future prosperity and progress of Islam.

The words, *willingly or unwillingly*, may also refer to two classes of men, viz. believers who give willing submission to God and disbelievers who have to obey His laws and do it grudgingly.

Of the various meanings of ظلال given under Important Words, the word "shade" does not obviously apply here because shade, being the absence of light, is a negative thing which cannot be spoken of as submitting to God. But ظل which is the singular of ظلال also means, the body or corporeal substance of a thing. In this sense the verse would mean that the bodies of all things are subject to the laws of nature. Even the bodies of disbelievers have perforce to submit to God, though their hearts may rebel against Him. The word ظل also means, figuratively, the representative or follower of a thing or person. In this sense the verse would mean that not only all living things but also their followers and representatives obey the laws of God. Again as ظلال is also the plural of ظلة which means that which covers or shades or protects, the word would also signify "leaders or rulers of the people." Combining all these different senses of the word, the verse would therefore mean that the entire creation as well as leaders of men and their followers are all subject to the laws of God. What is hinted at is that disbelievers should beware of opposing the Holy Prophet because opposition to him means defiance of the whole of creation and of the very laws of nature, which is not possible to do. This interpretation of the verse is supported by 13:42.

By using the words, *in the mornings and the evenings*, which are the two times when the shadows of things are longest, the verse emphasizes that, however vast the

17. [a]Say, ‘Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?’ Say, ‘Allah.’ Say, ‘Have you then taken beside Him helpers [b]who have no power for good or harm *even* for themselves?’ Say, [c]‘Can the blind and the seeing be equal? Or, can darkness be equal to light? Or, do they assign to Allah partners who have created the like of His creation so that the *two* creations appear similar to them?’ Say, ‘Allah *alone* is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Most Supreme.’[1628]

قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ قُلِ
اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلْ اَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اَوْلِيَآءَ لَا
يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِاَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ؕ قُلْ
هَلْ يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ اَمْ هَلْ
تَسْتَوِى الظُّلُمٰتُ وَالنُّوْرُ ۚ اَمْ جَعَلُوْا
لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ خَلَقُوْا كَخَلْقِهٖ فَتَشَابَهَ
الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ
وَّهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٧﴾

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[a]23:87. [b]25:4. [c]11:25; 35:20.

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power of disbelievers may grow, they cannot succeed against the Holy Prophet.

1628. Commentary:

The words, *who have no power for good or harm even for themselves*, spoken about false deities point to a strange coincidence. Generally, the lives of all those persons who later came to be worshipped as deities were full of hardship and privation. Jesus, Imām Ḥusain, Rama, etc., all led very hard lives. This fact seems to entail a strong warning to their misguided worshippers that they could expect no benefit or help from those who could not even protect themselves from harm or danger.

In the words, *Can the blind and the seeing be equal*?, disbelievers are told that they, being spiritually and morally blind, should not be deceived by their power and their numbers against the Holy Prophet, as even an army of blind men is powerless against one person who has eyes. The Prophet and his followers possess sight, while disbelievers are blind.

The powerlessness of the disbelievers is further brought home to them in the simile of light and darkness referred to in the words, *can darkness be equal to light*? Disbelievers are told that as darkness possesses no independent existence, being only the negation of light, it must flee before light. So disbelievers cannot stand against the Holy Prophet. In the last part of the verse disbelievers are challenged to produce anything which they think

18. [a]He sends down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood bears *on its surface* swelling foam. And from that which they heat in the fire, seeking *to make* ornaments or utensils, *comes out* a foam similar to it. Thus does Allah illustrate truth and falsehood. Now, as to the foam, it goes away as rubbish, but as to that which benefits men, it stays on the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables.**1629**

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌۢ
بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا ؕ وَمِمَّا
يُوْقِدُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَآءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ
مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ
الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۬ؕ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ
جُفَآءً ۚ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي
الْأَرْضِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ
الْأَمْثَالَ ؕ﴿١٨﴾

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[a] 39:22.

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has been created by their false deities.

The Quran has used two different words to express the Unity of God, viz. (1) احد and (2) واحد. Whereas the former denotes the absolute Unity of God without relation to any other being, the latter means only "the first" or "the starting point" and requires a second and a third to follow it. The Divine attribute of واحد (One) is thus intended to show that God is the real "source" from which all creation springs. Although none of His creatures is similar to Him in perfection and He is Independent of all, yet everything does point to Him, just as a second or a third thing necessarily points to the first. The attribute واحد (One) has therefore been used here as an evidence of the truth of the previous statement, viz. *Allah alone is the Creator of all things*. As against this, where the Quran seeks to refute the doctrine of the son-ship of those who have been falsely given that status, it uses the word احد i.e. He Who has ever been One and alone and has begotten no child (112:2).

The addition of the attribute of "Most Supreme" to "One" signifies that God does not need the help or assistance of any being for the control and governance of the universe He has brought into existence, because He is not only the source of all things but is also Supreme and Powerful over them. Hence it is useless and absurd for disbelievers to worship their false deities.

1629. Important Words:

جفاء (rubbish) is derived from جفأ (*jafā’a*) which means, it (valley

19. For those who respond to their Lord is *eternal* good; and as for those who respond not to Him, [a]if they had all that is in the earth and the like of it added thereto, they would *readily* ransom themselves therewith. It is these that shall have an evil reckoning and their abode is

لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ
وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهٗ لَوْ اَنَّ لَهُمْ مَّا فِي
الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهٖ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الْحِسَابِ ۬ۙ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿۱۹﴾

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[a] 5:37; 39:48.

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flowing with water) cast forth froth or foam or particles of rubbish or refuse. جفت القدر means, the cooking-pot cast forth its froth or foam in boiling. Hence جفاء means, what is cast forth in the form of froth or foam or scum or rubbish by a torrent or a cooking-pot. Figuratively, the word also means, anything that is worthless or useless (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse has used two very apt illustrations. First, it says that when rain falls and water begins to flow in various directions, then so much foam and froth appears on the surface of the water in places which are quite clean that it seems to cover it altogether.

But soon the foam subsides and the water is seen rushing along. In the second illustration froth is referred to as appearing on the surface of gold or silver or any other metal when the smith melts it to make ornaments or utensils, but the smith removes the scum and then only pure metal remains behind.

In the first illustration, truth is compared to water and falsehood to foam which, in the beginning seems to prevail over truth, but in the end it is carried away even as rubbish is swept away by a powerful current of water. In the second illustration, truth is likened to gold or silver which, when melted, brings forth a foamy excretion which is cast away, leaving behind the unmixed metal, pure and bright.

The parable implies that before the mighty onrush of Islam the foam and froth of false beliefs and practices will disappear. The parable also means that through the Prophets of God a great awakening in the nature of man causes a conflict between his good inclinations and the evil customs and usages to which he has subjected himself. Those whose inner nature is good emerge from this conflict with their wrong ideas and beliefs replaced by right ones.

The words, *so that valleys flow according to their measure*, mean that different people benefit by the truth according to their respective capacities for assimilation.

Hell. What a wretched place of rest![1630]

R. 3.

20. Is he, then, who knows that what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord is the truth, like one who is blind? *But* only those gifted with understanding will reflect:[1631]

أَفَمَنْ يَّعْلَمُ أَنَّمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمٰى ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ ۙ﴿۲۰﴾

21. [a]Those who fulfil Allah’s pact, and break not the covenant;[1632]

الَّذِيْنَ يُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِيْثَاقَ ۙ﴿۲۱﴾

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[a] 6:153; 16:92; 17:35.

1630. Important Words:

الحسنى (eternal good) being the feminine of الاحسن means, that which is better; or that which is best; victory; the good, final or ultimate state or condition ordained for the Faithful; Paradise; the view or vision of God (Lane). See also 10:27.

Commentary:

The verse says that those who accept the Message of God will finally achieve success and victory and will meet their Lord. Their intellectual powers will become sharpened. On the contrary, those who reject it will decline materially and morally till failure and ruin encompass them and no ransom will save them from the punishment of God.

The expression, *that shall have an evil reckoning*, means that the actions of disbelievers will result not to their liking. They will not be able to render a good account of the faculties with which God had endowed them to make spiritual progress but which they abused.

1631. Important Words:

الباب (understanding). See 2:180.

Commentary:

In this verse we are told that although success lies in following the teachings of the Quran, only those who make proper use of their reasoning faculties can benefit by it. It is noteworthy that as the teachings of Islam make an irresistible appeal to human reason, the Quran constantly exhorts men to make use of their understanding and reasoning faculties.

1632. Commentary:

In the preceding verse it was pointed out that only those gifted with understanding can benefit by the Quran. In the present verse some marks of the men of understanding are given:

22. And those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined, and fear their Lord, and dread the evil reckoning;[1633]

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ
يُّوْصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُوْنَ
سُوْٓءَ الْحِسَابِ ؕ﴿۲۲﴾

23. And those who persevere in seeking the favour of their Lord, [a]and observe Prayer, and spend out of that with which We have provided them, secretly and openly, [b]and repel evil with good. It is these who shall have

وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ
وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ
سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً وَّيَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ
السَّيِّئَةَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ۙ﴿۲۳﴾

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[a]2:4; 8:4; 14:32; 27:4. [b]41:35.

(1) They are true to the pledge they have made with God. As men of understanding they know that all blessing is from God. So they accept only that which is from God and is useful and reject what is calculated to bring them no benefit. (2) They do not break God’s covenant and subordinate all other things to it. This is indeed a sure mark of those who understand and realize the truth and who are not satisfied with the shell in preference to the kernel; the word لب (the plural of which is الباب), as used in the previous verse, also meaning kernel or pith or choice part.

1633. Commentary:

This verse contains a few more signs of "the men of understanding" mentioned in v. 20. After fulfilling their covenant with God and establishing a true and real connection with Him, they turn to His creatures and form a true connection with them also, in the manner and to the extent prescribed by God. Thus, after faithfully discharging their duties to God, they fulfil the obligations they owe to His creatures; and for the performance of this double duty and the fulfilment of the twofold covenant, they make use of the means created by Him.

The expression, *fear their Lord*, means that after having established a true relationship with God and man, they are ever on their guard lest it should be broken through negligence on their part.

The verse thus embodies another sign of "the men of understanding." Whereas, on the one hand, they are watchful and anxious lest they should be deprived of the nearness of God after they have once attained it, on the other, they fear lest they should incur the displeasure of God by showing laxity in the performance of their duty to their fellow beings. See also 2:28.

the *best* reward of the *final* abode—1634

1634. Important Words:

وجہ (favour). See 2:113, 116 & 6:53.

عقبی الدار (reward of the final abode). عقبی is derived from عقب for which see v. 7. عقبی means, end; the last or latter part or state; consequence, result or issue; recompense or requital or reward; that which is given in exchange for something (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse gives four more signs of the men endowed with understanding referred to in v. 20: (1) They observe صبر i.e. they abstain from sin, are steadfast in virtue and do not give way to impatience and wailing, which, as explained under 2:156, is the meaning of this word. They do all this with a view to winning the favour and pleasure of God, and not in the pursuit of any selfish or sectional interest, or from natural weakness i.e. their patience is not born of cowardice, but is due to a desire to please God even when they have the power to take revenge. (2) They observe Prayers regularly and with all the necessary conditions, which means that their connection with God does not lack permanence and constancy. (3) They spend out of what God has given them openly and in secret to meet the needs of the poor and the destitute. (4) They repel evil with good, which means that they do good deeds so that others may imitate their example and forsake evil. They are not content with the mere preaching of good, but themselves set a good example and thus seek to undermine evil. An alternative meaning is that they preach the doing of good, and in this way make evil die and disappear.

The words, *repel evil with good*, also mean that men of understanding do "good" deeds with the object of removing "evil" i.e. they neither insist on retaliation regardless of the nature of the offence or the suitability of the punishment nor do they persist in unqualified forgiveness but follow the course best suited for the eradication of evil. They resort to retaliation if it serves the purpose and to forgiveness if forgiveness is calculated to bring about the desired result. In short, they cut at the very root of "evil" by whatever method is "good" in the circumstances. The words *repel evil with good*, may also mean that they do not meet "evil" with "evil," but always observe justice and never forsake the path of equity and justice in dealing with evil.

The word عقبی (reward) is generally used in a good sense. The word الدار (the abode) refers to the next world; for it is the next world that is the real abode of man, the present world being only a temporary place of residence. Hence the expression لھم عقبی الدار means, "they shall have a good end in the life to come."

24. [a]Gardens of eternity. They shall enter them and *also* those who are righteous from among their fathers, and their wives and their children. And angels shall enter unto them from every gate, *saying*:**1635**

جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ یَّدۡخُلُوۡنَہَا وَ مَنۡ صَلَحَ
مِنۡ اٰبَآئِہِمۡ وَ اَزۡوَاجِہِمۡ وَ ذُرِّیّٰتِہِمۡ
وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃُ یَدۡخُلُوۡنَ عَلَیۡہِمۡ مِّنۡ کُلِّ بَابٍ ۚ﴿۲۴﴾

25. [b]‘Peace be unto you, because you were steadfast; behold how excellent is the reward of the Abode!’**1636**

سَلٰمٌ عَلَیۡکُمۡ بِمَا صَبَرۡتُمۡ فَنِعۡمَ
عُقۡبَی الدَّارِ ؕ﴿۲۵﴾

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[a]40:9. [b]39:74.

1635. Commentary:

This verse enunciates a great truth which has been mentioned by the Quran only viz. any good or bad act that a man does is shared by many other persons. The success of a tradesman in his trade or of a farmer in his farming or of an industrialist in his industry is due to the intentional or unintentional cooperation of a good many other individuals. It is for this reason that the Quran has laid down the institution of Zakāh and has thereby given to the poor what is due to them in the property of the rich. What is true of a tradesman or an industrialist or an agriculturist is also true of others. Similarly, the wife of a religious missionary who goes to preach in a foreign country is a sharer in his work, for she looks after his children and performs his sundry other duties connected with his household. In the same way his parents and children rightfully have a share in his good work. As, therefore, a man does good works or wins credit with the intentional or unintentional help of his relatives and kinsmen, they all are made to participate proportionately in his rewards, and the Wise and Merciful God has laid down the law that in Heaven all members of the family of a person who has excelled others in virtue, will be placed with him, provided, of course, they have earned a place in Heaven, by their own righteous deeds.

The words, *angels shall enter unto them from every gate*, are not here used to point out that there will be many gates of Heaven but that the various classes of good deeds of the believers will, in the next world, be represented as so many gates.

1636. Commentary:

The entering of the angels through every gate, referred to in the preceding verse, signifies that the angels will tell the inmates of Paradise that the latter had entered it through a particular gate on account of a particular good deed done by them and that their different virtues

26. And those who [a]break the covenant of Allah, after having established it and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined, and act corruptly in the earth: on them is the curse *of God* and they shall have a grievous abode.**1637**

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَ اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ مِيْثَاقِهٖ وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَاۤ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ
بِهٖۤ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۙ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ ﴿۲۶﴾

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[a] 2:28.

had been represented to them as different gates. By saying, *Peace be unto you*, as used in the present verse, the angels will remind believers that, as they practised every kind of virtue, they will enjoy every kind and form of peace from every side, the word سلام (peace) being repeated at every gate of Paradise separately.

The construction of the expression سلام علیکم (peace be unto you) is also intended to signify that the bliss of Paradise will be abiding and permanent because believers were "steadfast" i.e. displayed patience constantly and in all circumstances. The verse, therefore, purports to say to believers: "You stuck to virtue as long as you lived, thus you can rightly be regarded as having performed your duty. It was not in your power to avoid death. You adhered to virtue as long as it was in your power to do so. When, therefore, the hand of death put a stop to your good deeds, it became incumbent on God to grant you perpetual peace and everlasting bliss even as you would have ever continued on the path of virtue if you had lived." The verse thus contains an effective answer to the objection, "How can deeds of limited duration win unlimited reward?"

The verse also shows that those who lose heart under trials are not deserving of Paradise. Only those are deserving who maintain their connection with God in all circumstances and persevere in the doing of good deeds till the very end. See also v. 23.

1637. Commentary:

Some persons sever ties of kinship; others violate the discipline of their community. Some oppose Divine Messengers, while others show lack of fellow-feeling, and yet others forsake God. All these are different forms of cutting asunder *what Allah has commanded to be joined.* Such people not only cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined but go a step further. *They act corruptly in the earth* viz. they perpetrate acts of injustice, and even oppose and act inimically towards those with whom they are bidden to establish a firm connection.

The words, *on them is the curse of God*, mean, as they cut off their

27. [a]Allah enlarges *His* provision for whomsoever He pleases and straitens *it for whomsoever He pleases*. And [b]they rejoice in the present life, while the present life is but a *temporary* enjoyment as compared with that which is to come.**1638**

اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ؕ وَفَرِحُوْا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ ع ٣ ٨ ٩

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[a]29:63; 30:38; 39:53. [b]10:8.

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connection with God, therefore they shall be removed far away from Him. The word لعنة (curse) which denotes removal from the presence of God, has not been used here by way of abuse, but only expresses an actual fact. See also 2:89.

1638. Important Words:

فی (as compared with) is a particle used in a vast variety of senses. It denotes inclusion or in-being either in relation to place or time, as in the sentences زيد فى الدار i.e. Zaid is in the house, and فى ايام معدودات i.e. during a certain number of days. In many instances it may be rendered as "of" or "concerning" or "in respect of" as in اتحاجوننا فى الله i.e. do you argue with us concerning God. It also denotes concomitance and is sometimes synonymous with مع meaning, "among" as in ادخلو فى امم i.e. enter you with peoples. It also denotes the assigning of a cause, meaning, "on account of or because of" as in the words occurring in a saying of the Prophet ان امرأة دخلت فى النار فى هرة حبستها i.e. verily, a woman entered Hell because of a cat she kept confined without food (Muslim, *Kitābul-Birr waṣ-Ṣilah*). It is also synonymous with الى and على as well as with من and is sometimes used to denote comparison, as in the sentence ما علمی فی بحرہ الا قطرۃ i.e. my knowledge is but a drop as compared with his knowledge which is like a sea (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The verse disabuses the minds of disbelievers of the wrong notion that by accepting Islam they would lose the material benefits they now enjoy and that the bliss of the next world which it promises is but an imaginary thing. By saying that the prosperity or poverty of this life are in the hands of God, the verse implies a subtle hint that God had already decreed that all this prosperity should be transferred from the enemies of the Holy Prophet to his followers and therefore their acceptance of him would not even entail any worldly loss for them. The verse, however, proceeds to say that if even the acceptance of the Prophet led to some loss of worldly good, it would not matter, for his teachings embody abiding and permanent principles and relate to the everlasting

R. 4.

28. And those who disbelieve say, [a]‘Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?’ Say, ‘Allah causes to perish those whom He wills and [b]guides to Himself those who turn *to Him*:**1639**

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ
اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ
وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ اَنَابَ ﴿۲۸﴾

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[a]6:38; 10:21; 29:51. [b]14:5; 74:32.

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life of the Hereafter compared with which the things of this world are of no account. This is what is expressed in the words, *the present life is but a temporary enjoyment as compared with that which is to come.* Incidentally, the verse enunciates the great principle that intellectual and mental culture are superior to material progress, which always follows in the wake of intellectual advancement.

1639. Commentary:

In the previous verse, it was said that God straitens His provision for some men if He so pleases. The present verse says that when the attention of disbelievers is drawn to the fact that God possesses the power to deprive men of their sustenance, they hasten to demand that this power of God should come into operation with regard to them so that it may serve as a sign. The Quran answers them by saying that God is already showing signs as a result of which some are being spiritually guided and some made to perish but disbelievers do not benefit by them and demand instead the sign of punishment. Thus, according to them, the signs of mercy and signs of the deep knowledge of God are of no account. With them, the only signs to which they attach any importance are the signs of punishment. But what benefit could they derive from the signs of destructive punishment when no opportunity would be left for them to accept guidance after they had been destroyed? The tragic truth is that most people become deserving of punishment on account of their sins, and this is why they do not benefit by the signs of guidance. God therefore decrees and decides the destruction of such people. For an explanation of the word يضل see note on v. 34.

As the words, *Allah causes to perish those whom He wills*, might give rise to the doubt that God brings destruction on men arbitrarily, the Quran rightly adds, *and guides to Himself those who turn to Him*, meaning that God does not destroy men arbitrarily but it is His immutable law that He guides those who are desirous of turning to Him and destroys only those who seek to turn away from Him and refuse to accept His guidance.

29. ‘Those who believe, and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Aye! It is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort;[1640]

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوْبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ
اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ ﴿۲۹﴾

30. [a]Those who believe and do good works—happiness shall be theirs, and an excellent place of return.’[1641]

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ طُوْبٰى
لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَاٰبٍ ﴿۳۰﴾

31. Thus have We sent thee to a people, before whom other peoples have passed away, that thou mayest recite to them what We have revealed to thee, yet [b]they disbelieve in the Gracious *God*. Say, ‘He is my Lord; there is no God but He. In Him do I put my trust and towards Him is my return.’[1642]

كَذٰلِكَ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ فِيْٓ اُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ
مِنْ قَبْلِهَآ اُمَمٌ لِّتَتْلُوَاْ عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِيْٓ
اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُوْنَ
بِالرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿۳۱﴾

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[a]30:16; 18:31,108; 68:35; 98:8-9. [b]25:61.

1640. Commentary:

This beautiful verse embodies a great and extremely natural truth. The more the people of the world gain the paltry goods of this life, the greater becomes the hunger and the consequent burning of their heart. But as for those who seek God, the more they turn to Him, the greater is their peace of mind. This shows that search after God is the innermost yearning of human nature and the real goal of man's life, and that when that goal is attained man begins to enjoy perfect peace of mind, for then he rests, as it were, in the very lap of the All-Knowing and All-Powerful God, Maker and Controller of the universe. Would the people of the world had realized this great secret of happiness!

1641. Commentary:

The verse means that the believers will enjoy the blessings and favours of God in a greater measure than even that conceived by man. Happy shall be their final abode and happy indeed is he whose end is happy.

1642. Commentary:

The previous two verses spoke of the people to whom God grants

32. And if there were a Quran by which mountains could be moved or by which the earth could be cut asunder or by which the dead could be spoken to, *they would not believe in it.* [a]Nay, the matter rests entirely with Allah. Have not the believers *yet* come to know that, if Allah had enforced *His* will, He could have surely guided all mankind? And as for those who

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ
قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ
بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَلَمْ يَاْيْـَٔسِ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ لَّوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَهَدَى
النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
تُصِيْبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوْا قَارِعَةٌ اَوْ تَحُلُّ
قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ

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[a]3:155; 30:5.

perfect peace of mind and who enjoy a truly happy end. By the words, *Thus have We sent thee*, the Quran means to suggest that God has raised the Holy Prophet so that he may, by his noble teaching and noble example, produce men of this type.

The verse draws the attention of disbelievers to God’s attribute of الرحمٰن (the Gracious) in a very striking manner. It says that whereas disbelievers demand immediate punishment, God continues to delay and postpone it. It is His attribute of *Ar-Raḥmān* which is at the root of this postponement, and yet disbelievers say that He is not *Ar-Raḥmān*. If God had not been *Ar-Raḥmān* they would have met their destruction long before.

The question also arises here, how could the Holy Prophet raise a stone-hearted people like the Arabs to the high standard of moral and spiritual excellence mentioned in the preceding verse? In reply to this natural misgiving, the Holy Prophet is bidden to say, "It is not my work, but God’s. In Him do I put my trust, and to Him will I repeatedly turn for help till this object is attained." The verse also draws our attention to the great spiritual lesson that real reformation, which is the purification of the heart, is brought about only through trust in God and constantly turning to Him in prayer. Those who seek to reform the hearts of men by physical and material means can never succeed. Material means can at best reform the exterior of men. It is only spiritual means that can engender conviction and purity of heart. This is why the so-called cultured and enlightened nations of the West have, in spite of their best efforts, failed to present that high standard of morality and spirituality to which the Holy Prophet raised his Companions, notwithstanding his utter lack of material resources.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿٣٢﴾ ع

ع ٤ ١٠

disbelieve, [a]disaster shall not cease to befall them for what they have wrought or to alight near their home, until the promise of Allah comes to pass. Surely, Allah fails not in *His* promise.[1643]

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[a]22:56.

1643. Important Words:

الجبال (mountains) is the plural of الجبل (the mountain). Figuratively, the word جبل means: (1) chief of a tribe or community; (2) a learned man towering above those around him; (3) great hardship or calamity (Aqrab).

قطعت (be cut asunder) is formed from قطّع (*qaṭṭa‘a*) which is derived from قطع (*qaṭa‘a*), the former being the intensified form of the latter. They say قطع الشيء i.e. he cut the thing; or he cut it asunder. قطع النهر means, he crossed or went across the river. قطع الطير means, the birds migrated or journeyed from colder regions to warmer ones. قطعه بالحجة means, he silenced him in argument (Aqrab).

يايئس (come to know) is derived from يئس which means (1) he despaired of the thing; (2) he knew. An Arab would say قد يئست انك رجل صدق i.e. I have known that thou art a good man. The clause افلم يايئس الذين آمنوا means, have not the believers yet come to know? The expression يئست المرأة means, the woman became barren i.e. despaired of bearing children (Lane & Aqrab).

قارعة (disaster) is derived from قرع. They say قرع الباب i.e. he knocked at the door. قرع الرجل means, he beat the man. قرعه امر means, the affair came on him all of a sudden. القارعة means, great calamity; sudden calamity; the Day of Resurrection or of Judgement; an army marching forth quickly and striking the enemy quickly (Aqrab & Tāj).

Commentary:

The words, And if there were a Quran by which mountains could be moved or by which the earth could be cut asunder or by which the dead could be spoken to, they would not believe in it, do not mean that the Quran does not possess these qualities but that even when these wonderful attributes of the Quran were demonstrated, disbelievers would not believe. A construction similar to the one used in this verse occurs in a saying of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said, لو كان الايمان معلقا بالثريا لناله رجل من ابناء فارس i.e. if faith were to ascend to the Pleiades, a man from among the sons of Persia would bring it back (Bukhārī, Kitābut-Tafsīr). This ḥadīth does not mean that faith would not ascend to the Pleiades, or that a man from among the sons of Persia would not bring it back. On the contrary, it is a prophecy which foretold the disappearance of faith from the earth and its restoration in the latter days by a man from among the children of Persia. Incidentally, it may be noted here that this great prophecy was fulfilled by the appearance of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, whose family was of Persian origin. But to revert to the subject. A description of the great powers and qualities of the Quran as given in the present verse also implies the hard-heartedness and uncompromising hostility of disbelievers to the divine truth.

Taken literally, the expression, *by which mountains could be moved*, would mean that the Quran contains prophecies of earthquakes of such severity as will virtually remove parts of mountains from their places. The Quran does indeed predict great upheavals (*Sūrah* 99).

Figuratively, the word "mountain" may mean, great hardships and difficulties. In this sense, the description in the verse fitly applies to the Quran, because it solves all political, social, economic, moral and spiritual problems in a way that no other religious Scripture does. The word also means "learned men" among a people, or their "chiefs." According to this meaning of the word also, the description is quite applicable to the Quran, for with its advent, the old leaders of the people and the learned among them disappeared. The system of government underwent a complete transformation and hereditary kingship was replaced by *Khilāfat* i.e. a representative form of government. The old learning, which was founded on superstition and capricious fear, was superseded by one based on experiment, observation and a knowledge of the properties of things. The Quran abounds in verses exhorting men to make use of reason and reflection rather than indulge in superstitious notions, and enjoins them to make a close study of the objects of nature. The whole universe, says the Quran, has been created for the benefit of man, who is repeatedly urged to compel it into his service. The Quran, in short, abrogated the old order of things and inculcated a new approach to the various human problems.

The expression, *by which the earth could be cut asunder*, figuratively means that the Quran would speedily spread throughout the earth. Literally, the expression means that portions of land would be cut off from enemy territory and would pass into the possession of the believers. Both these things were fulfilled as predicted by the Quran, for it spread very quickly throughout the world, and whole countries fell into Muslim hands.

The words, *by which the dead were spoken to,* mean that dead and by-gone people should bear witness to the truth of the Quran, that is to say, the righteous forefathers of the living generation should testify to its Divine origin. This was also fulfilled. In the Old and the New Testaments, the "People of the Book" have evidence of the righteous men of old bearing witness to the truth of the Holy

R. 5.

33. And surely, [a]Messengers have been mocked at before thee; but [b]I granted respite to those who disbelieved. Then I seized them and how *terrible* was *My* punishment![1644]

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ ۫ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ۝۳۳

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[a]36:31. [b]22:45.

Prophet, yet they rejected that evidence. "The dead being spoken to" may also mean the appearance of the dead in dreams and visions and their bearing witness to the truth of the heavenly Messenger, but evil-minded people reject this evidence also. Both these things happened not only in the time of the Holy Prophet but also in the case of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah. The word "dead" also applies to the spiritually dead. The word has been used in this sense in the Quran (8:25). In this sense, the verse would mean that by means of the Quran those spiritually dead will not only be quickened into a new life, but will also be made to speak words of wisdom and will preach the Message of the Quran to the world.

The words, *the matter rests entirely with Allah*, mean that though these things may appear impossible, yet they will surely come to pass, because the Almighty God with Whom "the matter rests entirely" and to Whom nothing is impossible has Himself foretold their occurrence. To this Almightiness of God the attention of disbelievers is pointedly drawn in the words, *Have not the believers yet come to know that if Allah had enforced His will, He could have surely guided all mankind*? In the following sentence even the time is specified when these things will come to pass. The words, *disaster shall not cease to befall them for what they have wrought or to alight near their home, until the promise of Allah comes to pass*, mean, that calamity after calamity shall continue to befall the Meccans, and they shall suffer reverses one after another, till the prophecy relating to the utter destruction of their power is fulfilled. This prophecy met its fulfilment in a wonderful manner. In spite of the many signs the disbelievers had witnessed and the many reverses they had suffered at the hands of Muslims, they refused to see the truth till at the head of ten thousand devoted followers or, to use the words of the Bible, "ten thousand saints," the Holy Prophet marched towards Mecca and encamped "near their home," and with his triumphant entry into that city the power of pagan Arabia was completely broken and its glory departed forever and all vestige of unbelief and idolatry disappeared from the country.

1644. Commentary:

To the repeated objection of the opponents of the Holy Prophet as to

34. Will then He, Who stands over every soul *to note* what it earns, *let them go unpunished*? Yet, [a]they ascribe partners to Allah. Say, ‘Name them.’ Would you inform Him of what He does not know in the earth? Or, is it *a mere* empty saying? Nay, but the design of the disbelievers has been made to appear beautiful in their eyes, and they have been kept back from the *right* way. And [b]he whom Allah lets go astray shall have no guide.[1645]

اَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ عَلٰى كُلِّ نَفْسٍۭ بِمَا
كَسَبَتْ ۚ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ؕ قُلْ
سَمُّوْهُمْ ؕ اَمْ تُنَبِّئُوْنَهٗ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِى
الْاَرْضِ اَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ؕ بَلْ زُيِّنَ
لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوْا عَنِ
السَّبِيْلِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ
مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

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[a] 6:101; 10:67; 13:17. [b] 17:98; 39:24, 37.

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why punishment was not sent down upon them immediately, they are told that, as the sending down of punishment is postponed in order that disbelievers may have time to think and accept truth, the respite granted to them was no novel thing. The opponents of all the Prophets were given such respite with the same object in view, and former Prophets were also mocked at because of the delay in punishment, but that in no way injured their cause. The objection would have been justified if disbelievers had escaped punishment altogether; or if, when at last it came, it was not exemplary; or if its delay, during the intervening period, in any way, proved detrimental to the cause of truth. The postponement only served to fulfil its noble object for it afforded those, who were good at heart and were destined to believe, an opportunity to ponder over the truth and accept it.

1645. Commentary:

The words, *Who stands over every soul to note what it earns*, contain another reason why God delays punishment. The argument is that as God is keeping close watch over every soul and nothing, however remote and secret, is hidden from His knowledge and He is also All-Powerful, He needs no hurry to punish the disbelievers; for if only punishment were the object, He could bring the offenders to book whenever He liked. The postponement of punishment is not therefore a thing to be scoffed or wondered at. The wonder rather is that disbelievers do not ponder over the fact that they are offenders against God’s Kingdom and yet they do not fear His punishment and desire to hasten it.

The words, *they ascribe partners to Allah*, mean that if disbelievers pondered over their own beliefs and actions they would readily discover that they were sinning against God by ascribing co-partners to Him and have therefore rightly incurred His displeasure.

The simple words, *Say, Name them*, embody a mighty argument against *shirk*. Idolaters are called upon to describe what function their gods perform. The word "name" in the verse does not mean personal name but attributive name, for the personal names of some of the gods have been given in the Quran itself (71:24). The demand that idolaters should name the functions of their gods is such as cannot fail to bring home to them the absurdity of their beliefs. Suppose, for instance, the idolaters say about one of their gods that his function or attribute is that he can or does bestow children. Now the possession of such a power by a god would imply that he has control not only over the birth of children but over numberless other things which have direct or indirect bearing on geniture. Thus, in order to bestow children, the god to whom this attribute is ascribed must have control over diet and medicinal drugs and must have control over even the working of man’s physical system. He must also have knowledge of hidden things so that he may know the genital defects of the parents and also know what medicine will suit the special circumstances of the case. Besides, he must be able to impart the knowledge of hidden things to others. For instance, he must be able to inspire the physician or the patient as to what medicine and what food will remove the defect. In short, until a god possesses an all-comprehensive knowledge and unlimited powers, he will not be able to perform even one single function. On the other hand, if it be supposed that each and every god possesses all the powers required for his special function, then the existence of so many gods would become superfluous, besides being a potential source of discord and disorder; for in that case each one of these gods would be the Supreme Being, a position which is impossible to imagine.

The words, *Name them*, may also be an expression of contempt, meaning that the gods of the disbelievers are so worthless that even the mention of their names would put them to shame.

The words, *Would you inform Him of what He does not know in the earth*?, contain yet another powerful argument against *shirk*. If there had been any other gods, argues the verse, the fact ought to have been made known by God Himself through a Prophet or through angels, or the alleged co-partners of God should themselves have made that announcement, but no such communication or announcement has ever been known to exist. Hence, the verse takes idolaters to task by telling them that by ascribing co-partners to God they presume to inform Him of something of which He Himself has no knowledge.

35. [a]For them is a punishment in the present life; and, surely, the punishment of the Hereafter is harder, and they will have no defender against Allah.

لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ فِی الۡحَیٰوۃِ الدُّنۡیَا وَ لَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَۃِ اَشَقُّ ۚ وَ مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّاقٍ ﴿۳۵﴾

36. [b]The similitude of the Heaven promised to the God-fearing is that through it flow

مَثَلُ الۡجَنَّۃِ الَّتِیۡ وُعِدَ الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ ؕ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ ؕ اُکُلُهَا دَآئِمٌ

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[a]39:27; 68:34. [b]2:26; 4:58; 47:16.

The expression, *or is it a mere empty saying*?, means that idolaters say these things only with their tongues and have no real faith in them. The verse asks disbelievers whether they really believe in what they allege. In this way, an appeal has been made to human nature, which often proves a very successful way of bringing home the truth.

It often happens that when a man commits a fraud or imposture in order to procure worldly advantage, he himself gradually falls a prey to his own imposture which, by and by, begins to appear attractive to him. Thus man’s design is made to look fair to him not by God, but by man himself. Some men ascribe divine powers to certain creatures, not because they really believe them to be gods beside Allah, but to impose upon simple-minded people and to cheat them of their possessions. But, as time goes on, their own trick begins to appeal to them, and they become the dupes of their own fraud. This is the significance of the words, *Nay, but the design of the disbelievers has been made to appear beautiful in their eyes*.

The expression, *and they have been kept back from the right way*, signifies that when a man severs his connection with God, he becomes involved in *shirk*, whether hidden or visible. Man cannot remain without a companion. When he leaves God, the inevitable result is that he begins to seek the support of petty things, which gradually gives rise to *shirk*.

Here the Quran differs from the students of comparative religion. According to the latter, polytheism preceded the belief in one God. According to the Quran the reverse is true, and history supports the Quran. We see that Muslims and Jews were worshippers of one God in the beginning, but afterwards many of them virtually reverted to polytheism and idolatry. The case of Christians is still worse. They were first believers in the Unity of God but took to deifying Jesus afterwards and the whole community became stuck in the quagmire of *shirk*. Why should we not assume that the same was the case with the peoples of remote antiquity?

streams: its fruit is everlasting, and *so is* its shade. That is the reward of those who are righteous; and the reward of the disbelievers is Fire.[1646]

وَّ ظِلُّهَا ؕ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ۖ
وَّ عُقْبَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٦﴾

1646. Commentary:

The idea underlying the word جنة generally rendered as Heaven but literally meaning garden, is not that of a land covered with trees, but of the trees themselves that give shade and cover the land. Thus the sentence تجری من تحتہا الانہار (through it flow streams) means that streams will flow under the trees of the gardens. This is intended to point not only to the proximity of water but also to the fact that the inmates of Heaven will be the owners and masters of the streams referred to. The word نہر (stream) properly signifies "water running with ease and unrestrictedly," which points to the unhampered and unimpeded progress of believers in Heaven. The word نہر (stream) also symbolizes the vastness of the works of believers, for it is only to water vast areas and not a few acres of land that streams or canals are constructed. Thus the word نہر (stream) implies the fact that the works of believers are and should be wide in their range and the scope of their vision unrestricted. It should be remembered that in the description of Paradise, trees stand for believers’ faith while streams symbolize their works. Just as trees without water become withered and dry, similarly, faith unaccompanied by good works is a dead formality.

The plural form انہار (streams) has been used in order to point to the fact that believers’ good works are of diverse kinds and versatile nature. This is why they will take the form of not one stream but of many. There will be a particular channel of running water representing a corresponding good work of man, reminding the inmates of Heaven that the different streams of Heaven represent their own many good works.

The words, *its fruit is everlasting and so is its shade*, signify that the fruits of Heaven will see no autumn, no season of decay, nor even of dormancy. Thus there will be no interruption in the boons and blessings of Paradise. "Fruit" and "shade" stand respectively for inward and outward blessings and imply that believers will enjoy all kinds of blessings in Heaven, both external and internal.

The words, *the reward of the disbelievers is Fire*, mean that as disbelievers paid no heed to their spiritual or moral welfare and only copied and imitated others and lived, as it were, not for themselves but for others, so they will have fire for their reward, which benefits others but burns itself.

37. And [a]those to whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been revealed to thee. And [b]of the *different* parties there are some who deny a part thereof. Say, [c]‘I am only commanded to worship Allah and not to set up equals to Him. Unto Him do I call, and unto Him is my return.’**1647**

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ
اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُّنْكِرُ
بَعْضَهٗ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ
وَلَآ اُشْرِكَ بِهٖ ؕ اِلَيْهِ اَدْعُوْا وَاِلَيْهِ
مَاٰبِ ﴿۳۷﴾

38. And thus [d]have We revealed it as a clear judgement. And [e]if thou follow their evil desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have no friend nor defender against Allah.**1648**

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ؕ وَلَئِنِ
اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ
الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ
وَّلَا وَاقٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ ع

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[a]28:53. [b]2:86. [c]18:111; 39:12; 72:21. [d]12:3; 20:114; 43:4. [e]2:121,146; 42:16.

1647. Commentary:

This verse shows that some of the "People of the Book" had accepted Islam while the Holy Prophet was yet in Mecca. The words, *rejoice in what has been revealed to thee*, most probably refer to Negus, the Abyssinian King and some of his people who, in their hearts, had become Muslims. But as their faith had not yet become publicly known, the words used about them are not "they believe" but simply "they rejoice."

The words, *to whom We have given the Book,* may also refer to Muslims, who naturally rejoiced to hear the glad tidings of their final triumph.

By the word احزاب (parties) is meant all those people to whom a Prophet is sent and who do not accept him. In the verse under comment the people referred to are the Jews, Christians and all other disbelievers, as the Holy Prophet has been sent to all the nations of the earth.

The words, *a part thereof*, have been used because disbelievers denied or disapproved of only those parts of the Quran which disagreed with their own Scriptures or their own beliefs. With regard to the remaining parts, they had no disagreement with them.

1648. Important Words:

عربيا (clear). See 12:3.

Commentary:

That the Quran has been revealed in

R. 6.

39. And, indeed, We sent Messengers before thee, and We gave them wives and children. And [a]it is not possible for a Messenger to bring a Sign save by the command of Allah. For every term there is a *divine* decree.**1649**

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا
لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ
اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
لِكُلِّ اَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿۳۹﴾

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[a] 14:12; 40:79.

the Arabic tongue is not the idea that is meant to be expressed in this verse, for that language is spoken by the Arabs. The real idea lies in the deeper significance of the word عربیا viz. the Quran has been invested with a vastness of meaning which is beyond human power.

The words, if thou follow their evil desires, after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have no friend nor defender against Allah, may be taken as addressed either to the reader or to the Holy Prophet. In the latter case, the verse would be taken as expressing the Majesty and Independence of God. The Prophet was only a flute through which the sweet and majestic voice of God was being sounded. Away from the mouth of God it becomes silent and is no better than a piece of wood.

1649. Commentary:

Disbelievers objected that the Holy Prophet had come without any worldly resources. The verse under comment replies to this objection by stating that earlier Prophets were also without any worldly resources. They, like him, had their physical needs and requirements. They, too, had wives and children whom they had to support and look after and had their duties to perform. Yet in spite of all the impediments and obstacles in their way and in spite of their physical needs and requirements and of the absence of material resources, they succeeded and triumphed. So shall the Holy Prophet.

The verse also makes it clear that signs of punishment are certainly shown to disbelievers but not at the time and in the form in which they demand them. The form and time of signs are determined by God alone, for they are shown only "by the command of Allah."

It may be asked here what, if God raised Messengers for the reformation of man, prevented Him from delegating to these Messengers the power of punishment, particularly when He knew that Signs would be demanded of them by their opponents and also when even earthly governments invest their officials with certain magisterial powers? Again, if God had invested His

40. [a]Allah effaces what He wills and establishes *what He wills*, and with him is [b]the source of *all* commandments.**1650**

يَمۡحُوا اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثۡبِتُ ۚۖ وَعِنۡدَهٗۤ اُمُّ الۡكِتٰبِ ﴿۴۰﴾

41. And [c]whether We make thee see *the fulfilment of* some of the

وَاِنۡ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعۡضَ الَّذِىۡ نَعِدُهُمۡ

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[a]42:25. [b]13:40. [c]10:47; 40:78.

Prophets with the power to punish the people, it would have at least this advantage that the people would have feared and respected them and dared not oppose them. The Quran answers this question in the words, *For every term there is a divine decree*, which means that, as it is God Who determines the nature and form of each punishment and the time of its occurrence and He alone, being All-Knowing, knows in what form and at what time the sending down of a certain punishment will prove beneficial to the people, the power of punishing cannot be delegated to any other person. For if that delegation can at all be fair and useful, it must be accompanied by the delegation of many other divine powers, which is simply unthinkable. The infliction of punishment, therefore, could not be entrusted to the Prophets or to anybody else.

1650. Commentary:

The verse lays down two laws relating to punishment: (*a*) God either cancels the punishment partially or wholly; or (*b*) He lets it stand, as decreed. So punishment never comes unless it is fully deserved, nor is it ever in excess of the offence. It may, however, be less than what it should be or it may be altogether remitted. This dual law is invariably observed in all heavenly punishments.

The words, *with Him is the source of all commandments*, mean: (*a*) God alone knows the root cause of all commandments or the wisdom underlying them, so it is by His guidance alone that the right way may be known. (*b*) All the commandments of Sharī‘ah are based on Divine attributes, so the source of the law lies with God. The latter meaning makes it clear that moral and spiritual perfection is impossible of attainment unless one imitates and imbibes Divine attributes and conforms his conduct to them. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to define good or bad morals by human standards or in the light of human actions. Virtue is nothing but imitation of Divine attributes, and vice its antithesis. This definition is calculated to solve all those difficulties which philosophers of Ethics have to face in defining "virtue" and "vice" or good and bad morals. (*c*) That God alone knows the purpose of Divine commandments, therefore the punishment for their violation should also lie in His hands. He alone knows who should be punished and who not; for an things with which We threaten them or *whether* We make thee die, *it makes little difference*, for [a]on thee lies only the delivery *of the Message*, and on Us the reckoning.**1651**

أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

42. Do they not see that [b]We are visiting the land, reducing it from its outlying borders? And Allah judges; there is none to reverse His judgement. And He is swift at reckoning.**1652**

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهٖ ۗ وَهُوَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤٢﴾

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[a]3:21; 5:93; 16:83. [b]21:45.

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opponent today may become a staunch supporter tomorrow.

1651. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that when the object of signs of punishment is the reformation and reclamation of the people, the postponement or cancellation of some of them cannot reasonably be criticized. The real object of the advent of the Prophets is to deliver the Divine Message to men, and the fulfilment or postponement or revocation of a prophecy is only a secondary thing, being subordinate to this supreme purpose. It should, therefore, occasion no surprise if, in harmony with the fulfilment of this purpose and of the Divine decree, a prophecy is cancelled or revoked, particularly when all people have to appear before God on the Day of Reckoning when the whole truth will come to light. This verse is important inasmuch as it lays down a fundamental divine principle about signs of punishment. To think that as signs of punishment proceed from God they must always happen as foretold is simply absurd and, besides clashing with the Divine attribute of mercy, belies the very purpose for which Prophets of God are raised.

1652. Commentary:

This verse strongly refutes those critics of the Holy Prophet who allege that he showed no sign.

Do they not see, says the verse, that God is gradually reducing and curtailing the land from its sides? Is not that a sign of the triumph of Islam? It is making inroads into every home and into all sections and stations of society—the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the slave and the master. Is not this a sign sufficient to convince all fair-minded critics? The word الارض (land) may also refer to "the land of Arabia," in which case the verse would mean that Islam is fast spreading throughout the

43. And those who were before them [a]did *also* devise plans but all *effective* devising of plans belongs to Allah. He knows what every soul earns; and the disbelievers shall soon know [b]whose will be the final reward of *this* abode.[1653]

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلّٰهِ
الْمَكْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ؕ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكُفّٰرُ لِمَنْ
عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿۴۳﴾

44. And those who disbelieve say, [c]'Thou art not a Messenger.' Say, [d]'Sufficient is Allah as a Witness between me and you, and *so is* he who possesses knowledge of the Book.'[1654]

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ؕ
قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًۢا بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۙ
وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْكِتٰبِ ﴿۴۴﴾ ع ۱۲

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[a]3:55; 8:31; 14:47; 27:51. [b]28:38. [c]25:42. [d]4:167; 6:20; 29:53; 48:29.

length and breadth of Arabia. As the expression اَتَى اللّٰهُ according to Arabic usage also means the visitation of God with punishment (see 2:211 & 16:27), the words, *We are visiting the land, reducing it*, may mean that the punishment of God is already slowly but surely coming down on all sections of the people.

The words, *swift at reckoning*, do not mean that, God is hasty in punishing disbelievers but that, when He decides to call the offenders to account, He does it quickly and nothing can prevent Him from doing so.

1653. Commentary:

The verse means that God knows the plans that disbelievers devise to frustrate the purpose and programme of the Holy Prophet, but they are not aware of the plans which God has devised to bring about their fall. Therefore, it is only when they face destruction that they will know who was destined to succeed in the end.

The words, *the disbelievers shall soon know whose will be the final reward of this abode*, not only signify that believers will certainly succeed in the end, which is not distant, but also hint that some leaders of disbelief will live to see Islam triumph, and this is exactly what happened.

The words, *He knows what every soul earns*, mean that since God is All-Knowing all the secret designs of the enemies of Islam are known to Him and so no plan or stratagem can frustrate His purpose.

1654. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is told in this verse not to get annoyed or perturbed if, in spite of the many signs and arguments that establish his truth, evilly-disposed disbelievers continue to deny his divine mission. Why at all should he worry when he possesses these two powerful witnesses—fresh signs from heaven and the prophecies of the previous Scriptures? Indeed, it is only these two powerful supports that have always helped and will always help the cause of the Divine Messengers to triumph. This is what is hinted at in the concluding words of the verse: *Sufficient is Allah as a witness…and so is he, who possesses knowledge of the Book.*

CHAPTER 14

IBRĀHĪM

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Place of Revelation

The whole *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah, however, make an exception of verses 29-31, which according to them were revealed at Medina.

Subject Matter

The subject matter of the previous chapter has been continued and explained more fully and clearly in this chapter. In this *Sūrah* the truth of the Quranic teaching is sought to be proved from observation, inferences to this effect having been drawn from facts of history. It is pointed out that in circumstances similar to that of the Holy Prophet, Messengers of God were successful in their own day against very powerful opposition. The Holy Prophet, therefore, is also bound to succeed in his mission in spite of the meagreness of his means.

The real purpose of Quranic revelation is to provide guidance for mankind, which is groping in darkness. The Holy Prophet has been raised to bring people out of this Cimmerian darkness into light. Prophets had also appeared before him, prominent among them being Moses, who is depicted in the *Sūrah* as saying to his people that Messengers of God who appeared before him had also been raised to serve the same object. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to enlighten us about the main cause of the triumph of Divine Messengers over their opponents. It was that they worshipped and preached truth. After having dealt with this subject, the *Sūrah* lays down the special marks and signs of the revealed Word of God and the criteria by which its truth can be tested. Judged by these standards, the Quran is definitely proved to be God’s own revealed Word. Muslims then are advised as to how best they can profit by its noble ideals and teachings. Next the *Sūrah* points out that the change which was about to take place in Arabia through the Message of the Quran had been decreed ages before by Almighty God. It had been God’s plan and purpose since Abraham went to the wilderness of Paran and settled his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar there, that this barren and bleak country would one day become the Centre of the greatest religious Movement that the world had ever seen. Nay, Mecca itself was founded to fulfil this divine plan. This is why, in spite of the barrenness of its soil, God has always provided for its inhabitants their means of livelihood in ample measure. While Abraham was reconstructing the Ka‘bah with the help of his son, Ishmael, he prayed to God that He might raise up among them a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them His signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them (2:130). This prayer was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet.

The *Sūrah* proceeds to remind the faithful that their duties and responsibilities had already been explained to them by the Prophet Abraham and that they should never lose sight of them. It ends with a warning to the disbelievers that since Mecca had been founded to become the Centre for the preaching and propagation of the doctrine of the Oneness of God, they should give up idolatry. Any efforts on their part to contradict Divine purpose were bound to end in failure and frustration.

سُوْرَةُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكِّيَّةٌ ١٤

اٰياتها ٥٣ ركوعاتها ٧

(IBRĀHĪM)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.[1655]

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ①

2. [b]Alif Lām Rā. *This is* a Book which We have revealed to thee that [c]thou mayest bring mankind out of darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy—[1656]

الٓرٰ ۫ كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ
النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۙ۬ بِاِذْنِ
رَبِّهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ۙ②

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[a]1:1. [b]10:2; 11:2; 12:2; 13:2; 15:2. [c]2:258; 5:17; 14:6; 65:12.

1655. Commentary:

See note on 1:1.

1656. Commentary:

For an explanation of the abbreviated letters *Alif Lām Rā*, see 2:2. & 10:2.

This verse represents the Quran as a "torch" by means of which the Holy Prophet led men from darkness into "light," which is "the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy."

Commentators differ as to what is meant by "light." In popular parlance, students of modern philosophy or sciences or those who follow no revealed Law or, for that matter, know no religion, are spoken of by some as "men of light." Christians look upon their own religion as the source of all light, while according to Hindus their religion alone is light and all else is darkness. For the followers of Islam it is their faith which, of all religious systems, deserves to be called by this name. The verse under comment lays down a sure criterion by which true "light" may be judged and tested. According to it "light" means "coming out of darkness and attaining nearness to God," so only those who, betake themselves to Him may be said to have received the "light."

The verse mentions two attributes of God, "the Mighty" and "the Praiseworthy." The attribute, "the Mighty," pertains to outward light, while "the Praiseworthy" refers to inward light. He who develops in himself the first attribute is enabled to overcome his external enemies and become safe from physical afflictions, privations and hardships, while he who develops the second attribute overpowers his inward enemy, Satan, and gets rid of the darkness of doubts, misgivings, evil suggestions and ignorance. The Arabs were delivered from both these kinds of darkness through the Holy Prophet. They were not only revived

3. *The path of* Allah, to Whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. And [a]woe to the disbelievers for a terrible punishment.[1657]

اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدِ ۙ﴿۳﴾

4. [b]Those who prefer the present life to the Hereafter, and [c]hinder *men* from the way of Allah and seek to make it crooked. It is these who have gone far off in error.[1658]

الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَحِبُّوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿۴﴾

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[a]19:38; 38:28; 51:61; [b]16:108. [c]3:100; 7:46; 11:20.

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into a new life but superstition, ignorance, idolatry and moral depravity also took leave of them. Through the Holy Prophet they became not only the temporal rulers, but also the moral and spiritual teachers of the world.

1657. Commentary:

This verse is grammatically connected with the one that precedes it, the word "Allah" used here being in apposition with the words "Mighty" and "Praiseworthy" occurring in the preceding verse. The expression, *to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth*, means that the whole universe bears witness to God's being "the Mighty," for both heavens and earth are governed by the same law. Similarly, by the entire absence of any defect or flaw, they bear witness to His being "the Praiseworthy." So those who establish their connection with such a God will naturally experience a great inner change as a result of which they will be vouchsafed the dominion of both heaven and earth. It is noteworthy how magnificently this promise was fulfilled in the time of the Holy Prophet. So great was the temporal power of Islam that the *Khalīfah* issued orders from his seat of government and the whole Muslim world, which practically coincided with the then known world, reverently obeyed him. Similarly, early Muslims were looked upon as models of moral integrity and spiritual eminence, and history abounds in examples of the purity of their character.

1658. Important Words:

عوجا (crooked) is the noun-infinitive from عوج (*'awija*) which means, it was or became crooked, curved, bent, winding, distorted or uneven. They

5. And We have not sent any Messenger except with the language of his people in order that he might make *things* clear to them. [a]Then Allah lets go astray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.**1659**

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهٖ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ ؕ فَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝

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[a]13:28; 74:32.

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say عوج العود i.e. the wood was or became crooked, curved, bent or distorted. عوج الامر means, the affair was or became difficult, arduous or troublesome. عوج (*'iwajun*) means, crookedness or curvity; unevenness; corruption or deviation from rectitude; evilness of natural disposition (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means that those who forsake the way of the Mighty and Praiseworthy God can never hope to attain power and praise. Such people become lost in error and not only deprive themselves of divine favours but also seek to deprive others by preventing them from accepting truth. The words, *seek to make it crooked*, mean that, whereas outwardly they profess to seek true guidance, inwardly they are bent upon crookedness and refuse to give up the evil ways of their forefathers. The inevitable result of such an attitude is that, in order to satisfy their uneasy conscience, they call their self-devised practices the religion of God. This false satisfaction deprives them and their followers of true guidance.

1659. Commentary:

The verse does not mean that a Divine Messenger should receive his revelation only in the language of his people. What it means is that the major and fundamental part of his revelation must be in the tongue of his people, otherwise the conveying of his Message to those who are its first recipients would become difficult. Occasionally, however, a Prophet may receive a revelation in a foreign tongue. In fact, such exceptional revelation would serve as a divine sign or miracle.

It is wrong to infer from this verse, as the Rev. Mr. Wherry and other Christian writers have done, that the Message of the Holy Prophet was confined to the Arabs. Such an assumption is forcefully belied by other verses of the Quran in which the Prophet is clearly and unequivocally declared to be a Prophet sent for the whole world (7:159; 34:29). Not only does the Quran claim a universal mission for the Holy Prophet, but the Prophet himself also claimed to be a Messenger for all mankind. For

6. And We did send Moses with Our Signs, *saying*, [a]‘Bring forth thy people from darkness into light, and remind them of the days of Allah.’ Surely, therein are Signs for every patient *and* thankful *person*.1660

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰی بِاٰیٰتِنَاۤ اَنۡ اَخۡرِجۡ
قَوۡمَکَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَی النُّوۡرِ ۬ۙ
وَ ذَکِّرۡهُمۡ بِاَیّٰمِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ
لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّکُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَکُوۡرٍ ﴿۶﴾

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[a] 14:2.

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instance, he is reported to have said, بعثت الی الاسود و الاحمر i.e. I have been sent to the black and the red, meaning the whole of mankind (Biḥār). Similarly, he said, بعثت الی الناس عامة i.e. I have been raised for all mankind (Bukhārī). According to yet another ḥadīth he is reported to have said, ارسلت الی الخلق کافة i.e. I have been sent to the whole creation (Mishkāt).

Incidentally, this verse proves that Arabic is the mother of all tongues, because the fact that the Holy Prophet was sent to the whole of mankind shows that the language which the Wise God made the vehicle of His Message, must, in one way or another, be the mother of all languages. This was actually proved to be the truth by Aḥmad, the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islam (see "Minan-ur-Raḥmān").

The fact that the words, *Then Allah lets go astray whom He wills*, have been placed after the words, *that he might make things clear to them*, shows that it is only after the truth is brought home to men that they become deserving of punishment for rejecting it. Thus, although all non-Muslims are technically called disbelievers or *Kāfirs*, yet all of them will not go to Hell; for, as the verse shows, only those disbelievers become deserving of punishment who reject the truth after it has been made clear to them. Mere technical disbelief does not render one liable to punishment.

1660. Commentary:

The example of Moses has been mentioned here to show that, the Holy Prophet being like him, his opponents shall come to grief like the enemies of Moses. The Prophet’s enemies are thus warned that, while denying him, they should not forget the case of Moses and his enemies.

By the words, *the days of Allah*, are meant the days when God assisted believers against their enemies; also the days when He punished the enemies of the Prophets for their evil deeds. The verse means that the right way to bring men from darkness into light is to draw their attention to both the favours of God and His punishments. It is not at all right to think that faith based on fear lacks elements of reality. Such a view, indeed, betrays ignorance of human nature. Many people refrain from evil

7. And *call to mind* when Moses said to his people, [a]'Remember Allah's favour upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women; and in that there was a great trial for you from your Lord.'**1661**

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ اَنْجٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ؕ وَفِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيْمٌ ۝٧

ع ١ ٧ ١٣

R. 2.

8. And *remember also the time* when your Lord declared, [b]'If you are grateful, I will, surely, bestow more *favours* on you; but if you are ungrateful, *then know that* My punishment is severe indeed.'**1662**

وَاِذْ تَاَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَاَزِيْدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ اِنَّ عَذَابِيْ لَشَدِيْدٌ ۝٨

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[a]2:50; 7:142; 28:5. [b]3:116; 4:148.

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only due to the fear of punishment. If the incentive of fear were altogether dispensed with, nothing could wean such people from their evil ways. The Quran, being a perfect book, has provided guidance for men of all sorts of dispositions and temperaments and has made use of the incentives both of love and of fear.

In the words, *Surely, therein are Signs for every patient and thankful person*, Muslims are warned that, like the followers of Moses, they will have to pass through trials and tribulations and it is only when they have patiently borne the ordeal and come out of it with untarnished faith and sincerity that they will inherit the favours of God. But if, like the people of Moses, they prove ungrateful to God, they will be visited with punishment.

1661. Commentary:

The verse means that Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites with grievous torment. He imposed heavy taxes and forced labour upon them and killed their male children. But God came to their help and saved them from this grievous torment. In this connection see Exod. 1:14, 22.

1662. Important Words:

شکرتم (you are grateful) is formed from شکر. They say, شکراللّٰہ or شکرللّٰہ i.e. he thanked God; or he praised God for His beneficence; or he was

9. And Moses said, [a]‘If you disbelieve, you and those who are in the earth all together, *you can do no harm to God*; verily, Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.’1663

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰٓى اِنْ تَكْفُرُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ⑨

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[a] 31:13.

grateful to God; or he acknowledged the beneficence of God, and spoke of it largely, and acted in the manner incumbent on him in rendering Him obedience and abstaining from disobedience.

شکر (*Shukr* i.e. thankfulness) is of three kinds:

(1) with the heart or mind, which consists in forming an adequate idea of the benefit received;

(2) with the tongue, which consists in praising, eulogizing or commending the benefactor; and

(3) with the limbs, which consists in requiting the benefit received according to what it deserves. It rests upon five foundations: (a) humility of him who renders it towards him to whom it is rendered; (b) his love of him; (c) his acknowledgment of his benefit; (d) his eulogizing him for it; and (e) his not making use of the benefit in a manner which he (who has conferred it) may dislike. This is شکر on the part of man. شکر on the part of God consists in forgiving a person or commending him, or regarding him with satisfaction, goodwill or favour, and hence necessarily recompensing or rewarding him. The expression شکر اللہ سعیہ means, May God recompense or reward his work (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse enunciates the great principle that all advancement is bound up with شکر (thankfulness) which, as explained under Important Words, denotes acknowledgment of the benefits received. One can render true شکر to God only when one makes a right and proper use of His gifts. If right use is not made of divine gifts, the act of eulogizing God by man is mere verbal praising; it is not real شکر. Now, as the verse explains, the Merciful God has ordained that divine gifts increase by their proper use. If, for instance, one makes a right use of knowledge, which is a great divine gift, it is bound to increase. Similarly, if proper use is made of the organs of the body, they develop further. This divine law founded on God’s eternal mercy applies to all men irrespective of their caste, colour or creed. It holds equally good as regards both spiritual and material gifts. It operates not only in تقدیر عام (the general law of God) but also in تقدیر خاص (the special law of God).

1663. Commentary:

The verse represents Moses as saying that God’s sending down His guidance through His Prophets should not be

10. [a]Have not the tidings come to you of those before you, the people of Noah, and *the tribes of* ‘Ād and Thamūd, and those after them? None knows them *now* save Allah. Their Messengers came to them with clear Signs, but they turned their hands to their mouths, and said, ‘We disbelieve in what you have been sent with and surely, we are in disquieting doubt concerning that to which you call us.’**1664**

اَلَمۡ یَاۡتِکُمۡ نَبَؤُا الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِکُمۡ
قَوۡمِ نُوۡحٍ وَّ عَادٍ وَّ ثَمُوۡدَ ۬ۛ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡۢ
بَعۡدِہِمۡ ؕۛ لَا یَعۡلَمُہُمۡ اِلَّا اللّٰہُ ؕ جَآءَتۡہُمۡ
رُسُلُہُمۡ بِالۡبَیِّنٰتِ فَرَدُّوۡۤا اَیۡدِیَہُمۡ فِیۡۤ
اَفۡوَاہِہِمۡ وَ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا کَفَرۡنَا بِمَاۤ
اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِہٖ وَ اِنَّا لَفِیۡ شَکٍّ مِّمَّا
تَدۡعُوۡنَنَاۤ اِلَیۡہِ مُرِیۡبٍ ⑩

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[a] 9:70; 40:32; 50:13-15.

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taken to mean that the acceptance of Divine guidance by man in any way conduces to God’s own good. It is all for the good of man himself, for God is Self-Sufficient and above all needs.

1664. Important Words:

نبأ (tidings) is the noun-infinitive, from نبأ (*naba’a*). They say انباه اياه i.e. he informed him of it. نبأ means, information or a piece of information; an announcement; news or tidings; an account; a narrative or story; an announcement of great utility, from which results either great knowledge or predominance of opinion; news which fills the heart of a person with horror and makes it tremble (Lane, Aqrab & Kulliyāt).

ایدیھم (their hands). ایدی is the plural of ید which among other things means, the arm from the shoulder-joint to the extremities of the fingers; palm of the hand; honour; dignity; power; predominance or mastery; good or favour done to a person (Aqrab & Lane). See also 5:65; 9:29.

Commentary:

The words, *and those after them. None knows them now save Allah*, clearly indicate that Prophets were also raised among nations other than the progeny of Abraham, for, as the verse makes clear, the tribes of ‘Ād and Thamūd were followed by some about whom *None knows now save Allah*, whereas the Prophets that appeared among the progeny of Abraham have been mentioned both in the Quran and the Bible. So the words, *None knows them now save Allah*, evidently refer to Prophets other than those that appeared among the descendants of Abraham. The

11. Their Messengers said, ‘Are you in doubt concerning Allah, [a]Maker of the heavens and the earth? He calls you that He may forgive you your sins, and grant you respite till an appointed term.’ They said, [b]‘You are but men like ourselves; you desire to turn us away from that which our fathers used to worship. Bring us, then, *some* clear proof.’**1665**

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ اَفِي اللّٰهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَدْعُوْكُمْ
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ
اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ قَالُوْۤا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ
مِّثْلُنَا ؕ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَصُدُّوْنَا عَمَّا كَانَ
يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا فَاْتُوْنَا بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ⑪

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[a]6:15; 12:102; 35:2; 39:47. [b]11:28; 23:25.

words signify that the Prophets referred to have not been mentioned in any of the revealed Books which have remained partially or wholly intact.

The words, *they turned their hands to their mouths*, have been taken by some commentators to mean that disbelievers turned their hands to their own mouths in amazement at the high-sounding claims of the Prophets. To express wonder in this way is really a form of derision. In this sense the expression would mean that disbelievers treated the Prophets of God with contempt. The words may, however, also mean that disbelievers put their hands on their mouths in a way so as to wish the Prophets to be silent and cease talking about their claims. It is a general practice that when a person desires another person to keep silent, he sometimes puts his hand or occasionally one of his fingers on his own mouth as a sign for the other person to keep silent.

Taking the word يد in the sense of favour or gift, the expression would mean that disbelievers threw the favours of the Prophet in their faces, telling them to keep their teachings to themselves as they (the disbelievers) did not want them. The words that follow support this meaning.

1665. Important Words:

فاطر (Maker) is the active participle from فطر. They say فطره i.e. he clove, split, rent or cracked it; He (God) created it, or produced it or brought it into existence, namely, for the first time, it not having existed before; originated it; commenced or began it. فاطرالسموات means, the Originator or Creator of the heavens. Ibn ‘Abbās says, "I did not know what was the meaning of فاطرالسموات until two Arabs of the desert came to me, disputing together respecting a well, and one of them said, انا افطرتها i.e. 'It was I who originated or began it.' " فطرالعجين; means, he made the dough into bread, or baked it, without leavening it, he kneaded the dough and made it into

12. Their Messengers said to them, [a]‘We are *indeed* only men like yourselves, but [b]Allah bestows favour on whomsoever He wills from among servants. And it is not for us to bring you a proof except by the command

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ اِنْ نَّحْنُ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ
مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَمُنُّ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ
مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّاْتِيَكُمْ
بِسُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ

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[a]18:111; 41:7. [b]3:165; 6:125.

bread or baked it immediately (Lane & Aqrab). From the Quran it appears that there are four stages of creation: (a) the stage when nothing existed and the process of creation began for the first time, nothing having existed before; (b) the stage when matter had come into existence but had not yet taken a definite material form; (c) the stage when, as the result of combination, matter began to acquire diverse properties, the consummation of this process being known by the name of the law of nature; and (d) the last stage when, in accordance with the law of nature, the process of procreation or repetition in creation began, viz. man was born out of man and grain out of grain, etc. The attribute of فاطر (Maker) points to the second stage.

Commentary:

The verse gives the creation of the heavens and the earth as an argument to prove the Divine origin of the teaching given to the Prophets. The Prophets are here represented as saying to their opponents: "It is by the command of Allah that we preach. We say nothing of our own accord. How can you entertain doubt about the fact that God can send down revealed guidance? He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and it is unreasonable to think that, after having created man, He should have left him without guidance. Equally, it is inconsistent with reason to think that, whereas God has made ample provision for the material welfare and advancement of man by creating heaven and earth, He should have neglected to provide for his spiritual welfare."

The words, *He calls you that He may forgive you your sins, and grant you respite till an appointed term*, refute an objection of disbelievers that God was too dignified and exalted to invite humble beings like themselves to Him. They are told that it is indeed inconsistent with the dignity of God to call humble beings to His aid, but it is not at all below His dignity to come to their help. Nay, such an act is quite in keeping with His supreme dignity. God had therefore sent His Messengers that, through them, He might satisfy the moral and spiritual needs of man and grant him a new and higher life.

The expression, *you are but men like ourselves;...Bring us then some* of Allah. And in Allah *alone* should the believers put their trust.**1666**

فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾

13. And [a]why should we not put our trust in Allah when He has showed us our ways? And we will, surely, bear with patience all the harm you do us. So in Allah let those who trust put their trust.'**1667**

وَمَا لَنَآ اَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنَا
سُبُلَنَا ؕ وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلٰى مَآ اٰذَيْتُمُوْنَا ؕ
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ع ﴿١٣﴾ ع ٢ ٦ ١٤

clear proof, contains another objection of disbelievers that, if God at all was to have raised Messengers, they should have been beings befitting His dignity and not weak and humble men like themselves. The answer is given in the succeeding verse.

1666. Commentary:

This verse constitutes a reply to the objections of disbelievers mentioned in the preceding verse.

The reply is to the effect that a Messenger of God who is sent for the guidance of men and to serve as a model or exemplar for them must be a man like themselves; for, without being a human being like themselves, he could not be a model for them. If he were a "co-partner" of God or a so-called "son" or an angel or any other superhuman being, he could not be a model for men. So God chooses of His servants whom He pleases. There is none to set limits to His powers and choice.

The words, *And it is not for us to bring you a proof except by the command of Allah*, do not mean that the Messengers of God could not adduce a proof in support of their claim. They are meant only to answer the demand of disbelievers that the Prophets should prove their power and superiority over them. They are told by the Messengers that power and victory all come from God and that, as human beings, they (the Messengers) possess no superiority over them.

1667. Commentary:

The expression, *when He has showed us our ways*, signifies that the superiority of a Prophet lies in the fact that he proves that man stands in need of God's assistance by demonstrating his weaknesses. The expression also hints at the great truth that Divine law embodies only such injunctions as are for the good of man himself, the words "our ways" meaning the ways by following which man can make all kinds of progress.

By the words, *And we will surely*

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[a] 11:57, 89; 12:68.

R. 3.

14. And [a]those who disbelieved said to their Messengers, 'We will, surely, expel you from our land unless you return to our religion.' Then their Lord sent unto them the revelation: 'We will, surely, destroy the wrongdoers'.**1668**

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِرُسُلِهِمْ
لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِيْ
مِلَّتِنَا ؕ فَاَوْحٰۤى اِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ﴿١٤﴾

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[a] 7:89.

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bear with patience all the harm you do us, the Messengers of God make a confession of their weakness. Far from claiming any superiority over their opponents, they admit that their opponents excel them in material means and that if Divine help does not come to their succour, they would have to suffer untold pain and persecution at their hands. As, however, they had undertaken their task by the command of God, they would bear all hardships with patience and would thus prove that it was not their own exaltation and aggrandizement that they had in view. And, as their trust was in God, they also knew that final success was assured for them.

1668. Commentary:

This verse contains a subtle reference to a deep-rooted desire of the opponents of God's Messengers in all times. They ardently wish the Prophets to incline towards them a little and abstain from a wholesale denunciation of their beliefs that there may thus come about something like a compromise between the two parties. This desire of disbelievers has also been expressed in 68:10. But the Prophets always flatly refuse to agree to any such compromise and adhere unflinchingly to their principles, without deviating an hair's breadth from them. It is after disbelievers see that the Prophets accept no compromise that they launch a campaign of bitter persecution against them and thus either seek to force them back into their faith or compel them to leave their country, which includes extirpation by any other means. This is how disbelievers have treated God's Prophets throughout the ages—the same offer of compromise on their part, the same disdainful rejection of this offer by the Prophets and the same campaign of bitter persecution launched against the latter by their opponents.

In the words, *We will surely destroy the wrongdoers*, God has, as it were, turned the tables upon disbelievers. They had threatened the Prophets with expulsion from "our land" if they did not recant their faith. To this threat God replies by saying that, as the land is His and not theirs, so if it

15. 'And [a]We shall, surely, make you dwell in the land after them. This is for him who fears to stand before My Tribunal and fears My warning.'[1669]	وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِيْ وَخَافَ وَعِيْدِ ١٥
16. And they prayed for victory, and *as a result thereof* every haughty enemy *of truth* came to naught.[1670]	وَاسْتَفْتَحُوْا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ۙ ١٦

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[a] 21:106.

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comes to dispossessing the wrongdoers, it will be they that will be destroyed. The verse thus implies a prophecy of the ultimate destruction of the enemies of the Holy Prophet and of his triumphant return to Mecca.

1669. Important Words:

مقامی (My tribunal) is derived from قام which means, he stood up or he stood still. مقام means, the place of stationing; a place of continuance; stay, residence or abode; social standing, rank; God's Judgement Seat or Tribunal (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 55:47.

Commentary:

The Quran has used both the singular and the plural number of the first personal pronoun with reference to the Supreme Being. Where the Power and Majesty of God are meant to be expressed, the plural number is used; and where His Self-Sufficiency and Independence are intended to be emphasized or where the Power and Majesty of God are not meant to be stressed, the singular number is used. Or, as some Muslim divines have stated, where God intends to bring about a result through the agency of angels, the plural number is used; but where a work is to be performed through some special Divine decree, the singular person is resorted to. The present verse combines both.

The words, *This is for him who fears to stand before My Tribunal and fears My warning*, make it clear that the promises of victory and success are meant for those only who properly appreciate and realize the Majesty of God and His Power and who believe that God is the Master of the Day of Judgement and who fear lest their sins should bring upon them the punishment of God. Such a belief is a necessary condition for the fulfilment of the promises of God's help. This shows that mere nominal acceptance of Islam is no surety for success and victory.

1670. Commentary:

The expression, *And they prayed for victory*, may apply both to the Prophets and their opponents. The praying of the Prophets for God's help and victory, after they had been

17. Before him is Hell; and he [a]shall be made to drink boiling water.[1671]

مِّنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ وَ يُسْقٰى مِنْ مَّآءٍ صَدِيْدٍ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾

[a]69:37; 78:25, 26.

vouchsafed definite Divine promises that they would succeed, in no way reflects on Divine promises or on the Prophets' belief in the Divine origin of those promises. In fact, the Divine promise given to a Prophet about the final triumph of his cause does not mean that he should give up making necessary efforts for the success and triumph of his mission or soliciting Divine assistance. On the contrary, it becomes all the more incumbent on a Divine Messenger to do his best lest, through some lapse on the part of some of his followers or a weakening of his own efforts, the final victory may be delayed. That Muslims are enjoined to pray for the assistance of God even after definite and positive Divine promises of victory are given to them is clear from the Quran (3:195). Nor are these two things contradictory to each other. The Holy Prophet was given a clear promise of his triumphant return to Mecca (28:86), yet he continued to pray and work hard for the fulfilment of this Divine promise.

If, however, the words, *they prayed for victory*, be applied to disbelievers, they would mean that they sought by all means to win victory over the Prophets, but it was foolish on their part to do so, for those who oppose the Prophets of God never meet with success. Their prayers are doomed "to come to naught."

1671. Important Words:

صديد (boiling water) is derived from صد. They say صده which means, he hindered or prevented him. اصدالجرح means, the wound contained or generated matter, such as is termed صديد; or it ran with such matter. صديد means, thin water of a wound mixed with blood before the matter becomes thick; or matter or pus, like water in which is a mixture of red and white; or matter or pus mixed with blood in a wound; what flows from the skins of the inmates of Hell or what flows from their insides and is mixed with matter and blood; hot water boiled until it thickens (Lane).

Commentary:

Hot water (صديد) is possibly meant to be used as a sort of cure for some spiritual diseases in the life to come, as it is sometimes used as a cure for certain physical diseases in this life. The verse hints that, in spite of the fact that disbelievers have in their possession all the necessary means to attain their object, they will not be able to make use of them, just as hot water cannot be used for the purpose of drinking and quenching thirst.

The verse may also mean that in the life to come, the internal animal passions of disbelievers will assume the visible form of water mixed with pus and blood flowing from wounds, for the words ماء صديد also mean pus

18. He shall sip it and shall not be able to swallow it easily. And [a]death shall come to him from every quarter, *yet* he shall not die. And besides that there shall be *for him* a severe chastisement.[1672]

يَّتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِيغُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ ؕ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ﴿١٨﴾

19. [b]The case of those who disbelieve in their Lord is that their works are like ashes, on

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادِ ۣاشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ

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[a]20:75; 87:14. [b]24:40.

and blood mixed with water. In this case the expression ماء صديد will be taken to have been used to refer to that form of medical treatment in which diseases are treated by serums, vaccines and bacteriophages from the very germs of the diseases from which the patients suffer. Thus the expression ماء صديد may imply that the inmates of Hell will be cured of their spiritual diseases by means of the serum prepared from purulent matter of their own sins and iniquities.

The verse may also mean that the sins and the hidden impurities of the inmates of Hell will be laid before them and will thus be made to appear hateful in their eyes, as is done in psycho-analysis.

1672. Commentary:

The words, *And death shall come to him from every quarter*, mean that just as angels shall enter unto the inmates of Paradise through every gate (13:24), similarly death shall come to the inmates of Hell from every quarter. The coming of death from every quarter means that the many sins and crimes of disbelievers will assume different forms of death for them, but they will not actually suffer death because man is not meant to undergo death in the next world but to attain peace and bliss. It is worthy of note here that whereas "peace" has been represented in 13:24, 25 as coming from "every gate," which signifies its coming from outside, "death" is here spoken of as coming from "every quarter," which signifies its springing from within. This is so because peace comes from God, but death and destruction are the outcome of man's own actions, for he himself is the author of his spiritual death.

The words, *and besides that there shall be for him a severe chastisement*, point out that punishments in various forms shall continue to come upon evildoers one after the other, in the form of remorse, grief, estrangement from God, etc., and that Divine punishment shall not be transitory but shall long continue.

which the wind blows violently on a stormy day. [a]They shall have no power over what they earned. That, indeed, is extreme ruin.1673

عَاصِفٍ ؕ لَا یَقۡدِرُوۡنَ مِمَّا کَسَبُوۡا عَلٰی شَیۡءٍ ؕ ذٰلِکَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الۡبَعِیۡدُ ﴿۱۹﴾

20. Dost thou not see that [b]Allah created the heavens and the earth in accordance with *the requirements of* wisdom? [c]If He pleases, He can do away with you, and bring a new creation.1674

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ اِنۡ یَّشَاۡ یُذۡهِبۡکُمۡ وَ یَاۡتِ بِخَلۡقٍ جَدِیۡدٍ ﴿ۙ۲۰﴾

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[a]2:265. [b]6:74; 16:4; 29:45; 39:6. [c]4:134; 6:134; 35:17.

1673. Commentary:

The words, كفروا بربهم (disbelieve in their Lord) do not mean that they deny the existence of God, for even the idolaters of Mecca believed in the existence of God. They only mean the denial of the favours or powers of God. There are people even among the so-called educated classes who believe in God but do not believe that He ever interferes in the affairs of the world. The actions of such people are wholly devoted to the furtherance of their material ends. They have no thought for God and do nothing to please Him. It is of the actions of such people that the verse says that they are null and void so far as the reward of the next world is concerned. They are like ashes upon which a furious gale blows, widely scattering them.

The words "their works" may also mean the efforts which disbelievers made in opposition to the Prophets of God, for such works invariably produce no result and come to nothing. Instead of attaining the object for which they are performed, they bring ruin and destruction in their wake, as punishment from God.

The verse should not, however, be understood to mean that no works of disbelievers will produce any result for, in conformity with the physical laws of nature, every deed done in a right way must produce its natural result. What, therefore, the verse means to say is that the works of disbelievers would fail to achieve the real object of life, which is God's pleasure, because all their efforts are devoted to the achievement of the good of this world. On the other hand the Faithful, while reaping the fruits of their actions as a natural and inevitable result, will also win God's pleasure, because all their works are for the sake of God.

1674. Commentary:

The verse embodies a severe warning for disbelievers to the effect that by opposing the Prophets they are seeking to frustrate God's great

21. And [a]that is not *at all* hard for Allah.[1675]

وَّمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ بِعَزِيۡزٍ ۝۲۱

22. They shall all appear before Allah; [b]then shall the weak say to those who behaved proudly: 'Surely, we were your followers; can you not then avail us aught against Allah's punishment?' They will say, 'If Allah had guided us, we should have, surely, guided you. *But* it is *now* equal for us whether we show impatience or remain patient: there is no way of escape for us.'[1676]

وَبَرَزُوۡا لِلّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا
لِلَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡۤا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَـكُمۡ تَبَعًا
فَهَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّغۡنُوۡنَ عَنَّا مِنۡ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ
مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ؕ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ هَدٰٮنَا اللّٰهُ
لَهَدَيۡنٰكُمۡ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡنَاۤ اَجَزِعۡنَاۤ اَمۡ
صَبَرۡنَا مَا لَنَا مِنۡ مَّحِيۡصٍ ۝۲۲

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[a]35:18. [b]6:129; 7:39, 40; 28:64; 33:68,69; 34:32, 33; 40:48, 49.

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purpose, which the world has been created to serve. Their very existence seems to belie and contradict that supreme object. Hence they cannot be allowed to succeed in their designs. They should not, therefore, delude themselves with the false notion that they are irreplaceable. Not only will they meet with destruction, but God has actually prepared "a new creation" in the form of the followers of His Prophet who will take their place and prove worthy successors of an unworthy generation.

1675. Commentary:

The verse is intended to remove a very common misconception. While, on the one hand, once a people have fallen low, they lose all hope of regeneration and despair of their future, on the other, those who happen once to achieve greatness and prosperity begin to look upon themselves as incapable of ever falling low. This notion, however, is belied by the hard facts of history as well as our common observation and experience. Nations that had sunk deep into the morass of seemingly irretrievable degradation and were considered as past redemption have risen to great heights of material and spiritual glory, while peoples who have scaled the summits of power and glory and considered themselves beyond the reach of decay and decadence have sometimes fallen into the deepest pit of degradation. The verse means that it is not difficult for God to bring ruin to the powerful and prosperous enemies of His Prophets and make the latter's weak and down-trodden followers inherit the earth.

1676. Important Words:

برزوا (they shall appear) is derived from برز which means, he came out in

R. 4.

23. And when the matter is decided, Satan will say: ‘Allah promised you a promise of truth, but I promised you and failed you. And [a]I had no power over you except that I called you and you obeyed me. So blame me not, but blame your own selves: I cannot succour you nor can you succour me. I have already disclaimed your associating me *with God*. For the wrongdoers

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُّكُمْ
فَاَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ
سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ
لِيْ ۚ فَلَا تَلُوْمُوْنِيْ وَلُوْمُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ
مَاۤ اَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَ مَاۤ اَنْتُمْ
بِمُصْرِخِيَّ ؕ اِنِّيْ كَفَرْتُ بِمَاۤ
اَشْرَكْتُمُوْنِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

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[a]15:43; 16:100; 17:66.

the open country; he appeared before men after being hidden. ابرزالكتاب means, he made the book public; he published it. بارز العدو means, he came out (of his camp etc.) and fought the enemy. تبرّز means, he went into the open country to answer the call of nature (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, *They shall all appear before Allah*, embody a great truth about the decline and Fall of nations. It is not so much the actual weaknesses and misdeeds of a people that bring about their downfall as the exposure of their weaknesses. With their weaknesses having become exposed, their prestige and reputation, which more than their achievements are the mainstay of their success, suffer a mortal blow, lowering them in the estimation of rival communities and bringing in their wake decline and decadence. The words quoted above thus mean that God will lift the veil from the iniquities of the sinful and will expose them to public view, because from Him nothing is hidden.

The verse also sheds some light on another important principle about the rise and fall of nations. A people who are destined to perish give way to despair and become readily resigned to their low state, as hinted at in the words, *it is now equal for us whether we show impatience or remain patient: there is no way of escape for us*. On the contrary, a people for whom a bright future waits continue to make ceaseless efforts to improve their condition till all signs of decline and degeneration disappear and their feet are set firmly on the road to success and prosperity.

there shall, surely, be a grievous punishment.'1677

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. And [a]those who believe and do good works will be admitted

وَاُدْخِلَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ

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[a] 10:10; 22:24.

1677. Important Words:

مصرخكم (succour you) and مصرخي (succour me) are both derived from صرخ which means, he called or called out; or he cried or he cried out vehemently; he called or cried for aid or succour or, transitively, he succoured or aided someone. اصرخ also means, he succoured or aided; he came to the help of. مصرخ means, aiding or succouring; or an aider or succourer (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

By uttering the words, *I cannot succour you*, Satan disclaims the possession of any power to lead man astray. It is indeed true that Satan has no power over man. He is only an instrument for the manifestation of man's weaknesses, just as angels are instruments for the manifestation of his good qualities. In reality man is led astray by his own baser self, for, as the verse puts it, Satan only calls and it is man who obeys. The function of Satan is merely to make evil suggestions, just as the function of angels is to make good suggestions. Angels cannot make a man good, nor can Satan make him bad. They only show the way, good or bad, and man does the rest.

It may appear paradoxical on Satan's part to claim, as he has done in this verse, that he asserted the Unity of God and disclaimed association with Him. In a sense it is true, because he who is conscious of God's glory and has actually witnessed it cannot be guilty of *shirk* (setting up equals to God). *Shirk* comes into being when man accepts Satan's evil suggestions and disobeys God. Satan may thus be likened to arsenic. So long as arsenic does not enter the system of man in toxic quantity, it is a valuable drug, but when man makes a wrong use of it, it becomes a deadly poison. Similarly, before Satan enters the spiritual system of man he is but a test-question and nothing more. Indeed, Satan is only an agent deputed to expose human weaknesses and frailties.

But here arises a question. If Satan has no power over man, why will he be punished with Hellfire? This question is answered in 7:13, where Satan is represented as having been created of fire. How can a thing which is created of fire be said to be punished when cast into fire? A burning piece of coal is not tormented when thrown into a furnace. This is why perhaps some of the mystics in Islam have held the view that it is not Satan, but his manifestations and vicegerents that will be punished. Satan, they say, is but an agent meant to try the mettle of man and only performs his functions.

into gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide by the command of their Lord. [a]Their greeting therein will be ‘Peace’.**1678**

جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِہَا الۡاَنۡہٰرُ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَا بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّہِمۡ ؕ تَحِیَّتُہُمۡ فِیۡہَا سَلٰمٌ ﴿۲۴﴾

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[a] 10:11; 15:47; 36:59; 50:35.

1678. Important Words:

اذن (command) means, permission; knowledge; will; command, etc. (Aqrab & Tāj). See also 2:280.

تحية (greeting) means, prayer for peace and for long or everlasting life; greeting with such prayer; peace and good and long life; security from all evils. When used about God the word التحية signifies الاكرام، والاحسان i.e. bestowal of honour and favours by God (Aqrab & Lane). See also 4:87.

Commentary:

Deriving their authority from the words, *by the command of their Lord*, commentators have generally held the view that man’s going to Heaven depends not on his own good actions but upon the grace of God. This is not a wrong inference, for even the Holy Prophet is reported to have once expressed the same view. To an enquiry of ‘Ā’ishah whether even in his case good actions would not establish the right of salvation, the Holy Prophet is reported to have replied that even his salvation depended on the grace of God (Bukhārī, *Kitābut-Tafsīr*). In fact, the reason why people will go to Heaven, not by dint of their good works, but through the grace of God, is that all the faculties and powers by means of which they are able to perform good works are the free gift of God; hence it is from the grace of God that men’s good works proceed, and therefore whatever they get as a reward of their good works they receive as a favour from God and not as something earned or acquired.

The verse, however, possesses another meaning also. A true believer really needs and seeks after no Paradise; the only desire of his heart is to win God’s pleasure and His nearness. So if he is placed in Paradise, that will be only in obedience to God’s command and His wish. This interpretation is supported by a saying of the Holy Prophet. He is reported to have said that the doers of good works are divided into three classes. Some of them do good works with a desire to enter Heaven, while others do so in order to escape the punishment of Hell. But there is yet another class of people whose good works proceed wholly and solely from a desire to win the pleasure of God, their Lord and Master (Kathīr, v. 5, p. 122). For these fortunate lovers of their Creator, Paradise will be but an additional thing and not the object and goal of their life.

The words, *Their greeting therein will be "peace,"* may mean: (a) that

25. Dost thou not see how Allah sets forth the similitude of a good word? *It is* like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches *reach* into heaven.[1679]

اَلَمۡ تَرَ كَيۡفَ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ اَصۡلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّ فَرۡعُهَا فِي السَّمَآءِ ﴿۲۵﴾

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they will greet each other with the salutation of "Peace be on you"; or (b) that they will have their perfect peace and be safe from all harm and injury against one another; and (c) that their best gift in Heaven will be "Peace" i.e. they will receive the special favours of God and the angels will stimulate into action all their inherent and latent powers for good.

1679. Important Words:

طيبة (good) is derived from طاب which means, it was or became sweet and pleasant, or good and ennobled. طابت النفس بكذا means, the soul became pleased, contented and satisfied with that. طاب عيشه means, his life became happy and plentiful. طابت الارض means, the land became abundant in herbage; طيب خاطره (*ṭayyaba*) means, he put his heart at rest and afforded him peace of mind; he placated or soothed his mind. (Aqrab).

Commentary:

This and the following verses constitute two of the most important verses of the Quran. They contain the infallible criterion which helps a man to test and realize the truth of a revealed book that claims to meet the needs and requirements of all mankind.

The Word of God has been likened in these verses to a tree which possesses five essential qualities: It is (1) good (طيب), which means that it possesses a good and beautiful form; (2) it has deep roots in the earth (اصلها ثابت); (3) its branches reach high into the sky (فرعها فى السماء); (4) it yields its fruits in abundance and in all seasons (تؤتى اكلها كل حين) and (5) the yielding of its fruits is in conformity with the command and decree of God (باذن ربها).

The first quality is that it is طيب (good). As given under Important Words, a thing is called طيب (good) when it is free from all defects, is beautiful to look at, possesses an agreeable flavour, is clean and pure and is possessed of all good qualities in abundance. These qualities possessed by a revealed Book would mean that (a) it is free from all such teachings as may in any way offend against human reason and conscience or against human feelings and susceptibilities; (b) the person who acts upon it becomes fully satisfied with it; (c) it is grand and splendid in every way; (d) it is highly pleasing and (e) it surpasses other corrupted revealed Books in all these qualities.

The second essential quality of such a book is (1) that, like a good and deep-rooted fruitful tree, it possesses a strong and stable foundation which

26. It brings forth its fruit at all times by the command of its

تُؤۡتِيۡۤ اُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِيۡنٍۢ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهَا ؕ

means that it ever continues to receive fresh life and sustenance from its source, satisfying all human needs and the depth and vastness of its meaning knowing no end; (2) that, like a strong tree, it does not bend before the blasts of objections and adverse criticism but stands firm against all storms; also that it remains firmly fixed in its place and is not swayed by changes in the views and conditions of man; (3) that, like the tree which has roots deep in the earth, it possesses a very long life and is not subject to change or abrogation; (4) that it continues to possess a community of votaries and followers who, by carrying its teachings into actual practice, set up a very high standard of moral excellence and thus demonstrate by their practical example the excellence and beauty of its teachings; and (5) that it derives life and sustenance from only one source and there is, therefore, no disharmony or discord in its principles and teachings.

The third characteristic of such a book is that its branches reach high into heaven, which means that by acting upon it a man can scale the highest summits of spiritual eminence; that, like a large tree with branches extending over a wide area, it fully meets all the vast and multifarious needs of man, and there is not a question which concerns the material or spiritual welfare of man that it does not answer.

The fourth distinctive feature of such a book is that it yields its fruits in abundance and in all seasons (see the succeeding verse), which means that its blessings are witnessed at all times and that it continues to produce in every age men who by acting upon its teachings attain communion with God and who by their uprightness and the purity of their conduct tower high above their contemporaries.

The fifth characteristic of such a book is that the works of its followers produce not only results in harmony with the physical laws of nature but also a spiritual result which is the pleasure of God.

The Quran possesses all these qualities in full measure. In most beautiful and simple language it has thoroughly dealt with all the intricate and difficult moral and spiritual problems of man. It has satisfied and will continue to satisfy all the multifarious and multitudinous needs of man. Its principles and teachings are practical and practicable in all times. It has produced in all ages in the past (and will also continue to produce in future) men who, by acting upon it, came to establish a real and living contact with their Creator and who drank deep at the fountain of Divine communion. It has never been found wanting whenever tested and tried. The Quranic tree will never wither or decay and will continue to yield delicious and wholesome fruit till the end of time.

Lord. And [a]Allah sets forth similitudes for men that they may reflect.1680

وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

27. And the case of an evil word is like *that of* an evil tree, which is uprooted from above the earth and has no stability.1681

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيْثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيْثَةِ ۨاجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْاَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

28. Allah strengthens the believers with the word that is firmly established, *both* in the present life and in the Hereafter; and Allah lets the wrongdoers go astray. And Allah does what He wills.1682

يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿٢٨﴾

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[a] 13:18; 29:44.

1680. Commentary:

See under the preceding verse.

1681. Important Words:

اجتثت (uprooted) is derived from جث. They say جثه i.e. he pulled it (i.e. a plant) out from its very root; he uprooted it; اجتثه also gives the same meaning. الجثة means, the body or the dead body of a human being (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Unlike the good tree described in the preceding two verses, a book which is forged by the hand of man is like an evil tree. It possesses no permanence, nor even stability. Its teachings are supported neither by reason nor by the laws of nature. It cannot stand criticism and its principles and ideals keep on changing with the change in human conditions and circumstances. It is a hotchpotch of teachings collected from doubtful sources. It fails to produce men who can claim to have established a true and real connection with God. It receives fresh life from no divine source and is subject to decay and degeneration. Such is the inevitable fate of books forged by pretenders and false prophets. For a detailed and beautiful exposition of v. 25, 26 and 27 the reader is referred to "Tafsīr-e-Kabīr" by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, Second Successor of the Promised Messiah.

1682. Commentary:

The "firmly established word" is the same which is brought forth by

R. 5.

29. [a]Dost thou not see those who changed Allah’s favour into ingratitude and landed their people into the abode of ruin–**1683**

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا وَّأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ۙ﴿۲۹﴾

30. *Which is* Hell. They shall burn therein; and an evil place of rest is that.**1684**

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۗ وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿۳۰﴾

31. And [b]they have set up rivals to Allah to mislead *people* from His way. Say, [c]‘enjoy yourselves a while, then, surely, your journey is toward the Fire.’**1685**

وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ أَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿۳۱﴾

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[a]2:212. [b]2:23; 13:34. [c]47:13; 77:47.

"the good tree" mentioned in v. 25. The verse says that the followers of Islam, which is the good tree mentioned here, will in all ages receive fresh revelation and signs from God which will be a certain means of "strengthening" them.

1683. Commentary:

By "Allah’s favour" is here meant Divine revelation, referred to in the previous verse as "a firmly established word." God bestowed this favour upon the people, but the return they made was to become ungrateful and also ruin themselves by denying it.

1684. Commentary:

The denial of "the good tree" (v. 25) inevitably leads to ruin and into the burning fire, which such people will get in place of a resting place.

1685. Important Words:

انداد (rivals) is the plural of ند which means the like of a thing particularly when it is opposed to it (Aqrab). See also 2:23.

Commentary:

The word انداداً (rivals), applied to those things that are taken as objects of worship instead of the true God, is used in this verse not because these gods or idols were actually opposed to God, or because the idolaters looked upon them as opposed to God, but because the very existence of such idols or gods is opposed to the dignity of God. The verse means that, after having rejected the Word of God, idolaters have taken to such foolish things as the worship of false deities in preference to the Living and Almighty God.

32. Say to My servants who have believed that they should observe Prayer, and [a]spend out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, before [b]there comes a day wherein there will be neither bargaining nor friendship.**1686**

قُلْ لِّعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
وَيُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً مِّنْ
قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيْهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ ﴿٣٢﴾

33. Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and [c]caused water to come down from the clouds, and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; and [d]He has subjected to you the ships that they may sail through the sea by His command, and the rivers *too* has He subjected to you.**1687**

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ
وَاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ
الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ
الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۚ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْهٰرَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. And [e]He has *also* subjected to you the sun and the moon, both performing their work constantly. And He has subjected to you the night as well as the day.**1688**

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ
دَآئِبَيْنِ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿٣٤﴾

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[a]2:275; 13:23; 16:76. [b]2:255; 43:68. [c]2:23; 13:18; 20:54; 22:64; 35:28. [d]22:66; 43:14; 45:13. [e]7:55; 13:3; 16:13; 39:6.

1686. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that if believers desire the "good tree" (v. 25) to yield its fruit soon, they should faithfully observe the Divine commandment regarding the saying of Prayers and the spending of a part of their property in the cause of God, both secretly and openly.

1687. Commentary:

See under next verse.

1688. Important Words:

دائبين (performing their work constantly) is derived from دأب. They say دأب في العمل i.e. he exerted himself in the work and was constant in it. دائب means he who works hard and

35. And He gave you all that you wanted of Him; and [a]if you *try to* count the favours of Allah, you will not be able to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful.**1689**

وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ ؕ
وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ؕ
اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ ۳۵ ع
ع ۷/۱۷

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[a] 16:19.

constantly. The term الدائبان is also applied to the night and day which go round so regularly (Aqrab). See also 3:12.

Commentary:

In this and the preceding verses the Quran has enumerated some of the favours of God. Its object in doing so is, firstly, to point out that all things have been created for the use of man. If he has been foolish enough to take them as objects of worship, rather than put them to the use for which they have been created, he would be deprived of their benefits.

Secondly, as these blessings come from God so naturally they will be given to those who act upon the Word of God and lead righteous lives. So it actually happened, because the entire universe stood up like a servant to help the cause of Islam.

The verse also warns Muslims that they should not look upon God's gifts as their personal and private property but should let their fellow beings share in them, because the things created by God are meant for "you all" and all the creatures of God are entitled to a share in them. They are not meant to be enjoyed by particular individuals or particular classes or communities.

1689. Important Words:

لاتحصوها (you will not be able to number them). تحصوا is derived from احصا which again is derived from حصا or حصى. They say حصى الرجل i.e. he cast a pebble or small stone at the man. احصا means, he numbered or counted it, or he collected it into an aggregate, or he reckoned or computed it; or he reached the last number of it by means of حصى (pebbles or small stones), because the Arabs used pebbles for counting; he registered or recorded its number; he comprehended it, or knew it altogether. احصى كل شئ بعلمه means, God has comprehended everything by His knowledge, nothing thereof escaping Him, small or great (Lane & Aqrab). The expression therefore signifies comprehending or, as it were, encircling a thing and knowing its full number. As against this تعدوا (you try to count) signifies simply counting a thing, whether you comprehend the whole number or not.

Commentary:

The words, *you wanted of Him*, refer to the demands of human nature which have all been freely met. God has made definite provision for the satisfaction of all the cravings and

R. 6.

36. And *remember* [a]when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this city *a city* of peace, and [b]keep me and my children away from worshipping idols.[1690]

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ۝٣٦

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[a] 2:127. [b] 2:129.

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demands of human nature. For instance, if He has made eyes to see, He has provided for them light and beautiful sights; similarly, if He has made ears to hear, He has provided for them air and sweet, melodious voices.

The verb آتاكم (He gave you) may also be taken in the sense of "He will give you," for in Arabic the past tense is not unoften used for the future when it is meant to give the assurance that the promise made or thing stated is as good as fulfilled. In this sense the verse means to say that God would give Muslims all that they want—land, wealth and dominion, not to speak of spiritual favours. They will be given all sorts of facilities to propagate their Faith. Even the day and night, the sun and the moon (v. 34) will be made subservient to them. Then will God see whether they have made proper use of His favours and have glorified His name and preached His Message to the ends of the earth as they ought to do.

The verse does not mean that man cannot count all the favours of God, for this fact is too evident to need mention. What the verse refers to is the great favours which God was to bestow upon Muslims in future and which were to be too multifarious and multitudinous to be foreseen and counted now. All these favours were actually bestowed on Muslims. But, when they became (1) lax in Prayer and (2) lax in spending their wealth according to God’s commandment, the divine favours were withdrawn. The "good tree" (v. 25) has, however, again borne fruit through Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, and blessed are they who accept him, for theirs shall be the kingdom of Heaven and of earth.

1690. Important Words:

الاصنام (idols) is the plural of صنم which means: (1) an idol; (2) an image of a human being or an animal that is worshipped; (3) anything that is worshipped beside God. صنم is said to be an Arabicized word, but the root from which it is formed is found and used in the Arabic language, which dispenses with the necessity of treating it as a word of foreign origin. The Arabs say صنمت الرائحة i.e. the smell became foul. صنم العبد (*ṣanama*) means, the slave became strong. صنم الرجل (*ṣanuma*) means, the man gave out a sound. As idols or statues generally represented strongly-built men, they were called اصنام.

The proper grammatical form would be صنم (*ṣanim*) but the word in actual use is صنم (*ṣanam*). There is, however, nothing strange about this, for such exceptional uses are not rare in the Arabic language, e.g. instead of *Masjad*, the Arabs use the form *Masjid* (Lane & Aqrab.)

Commentary:

After having dealt with the fact that all the Prophets of antiquity succeeded in their mission without the aid and assistance of material means, the Quran proceeds in this verse to deal with the success of the Holy Prophet's mission in similar circumstances. The subject is introduced with an account of Abraham, the great ancestor of the Holy Prophet, in order to point out that the foundations for the success of the Prophet of Islam were laid thousands of years back. This is what is intended by making reference to the prayer of Abraham while he was settling Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, in the valley of Mecca. The verse points out that it was necessary that the people of Mecca should have been favoured with a revealed Book and should not have been left in darkness, for a promise to that effect had been made to Abraham long ago and God does not fail in His promises.

Abraham's prayer, referred to in the present verse, shows that he knew that idolatry would one day prevail in Mecca and the country around it. Hence his anxiety for the protection of his progeny against idol-worship. When the prayer was offered, there was no trace of idolatry in Mecca, which at that time consisted only of the house of Ishmael and his followers.

The verse also hints that idolatry and worship of the One God prevail in the world in cycles. Worshippers of God gradually take to idolatry while those addicted to idolatry become transformed into worshippers of the One God. Even a people who adore God in the fullest and the truest sense of the word cannot be said to become proof against idol-worship; for, by and by, the shades of idol-worship advance and the light of day gives place to the darkness of night. This state of affairs contradicts the theory advanced by students of Comparative Religion, viz. that belief in One God has evolved from belief in, and worship of, many deities. It appears from the Quran that alternate cycles of God-worship and idol-worship come on the world and that the former always precedes the latter. According to this view, belief in the Unity of God is founded on Divine revelation, while idolatry must be regarded as a perverted form of it. As opposed to it, students of Comparative Religion hold that the idea of God is only the outcome of fear and bewilderment and that out of polytheism belief in One God has evolved. There is a basic and interesting difference between these two points of view. According to the one, it is God Who created man; while, according to the other, it was man who created God, i.e. the idea of God originated in the human brain. The truth undoubtedly lies with the first-mentioned point of view.

Another interesting question requires to be answered here viz. why did Abraham pray for personal protection against idol-worship? Says

37. My Lord, [a]they have indeed led astray many among mankind. So whoever follows me, he is certainly of me; and whoever disobeys me—Thou art, surely, Most Forgiving, Merciful.[1691]

رَبِّ اِنَّهُنَّ اَضۡلَلۡنَ کَثِیۡرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۚ
فَمَنۡ تَبِعَنِیۡ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّیۡ ۚ وَ مَنۡ عَصَانِیۡ
فَاِنَّکَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۳۷﴾

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[a] 71:25.

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he, *keep me and my children away from worshipping idols*. Was it at all possible for him to stoop to *shirk*? The answer to this question is that man has been endowed with two kinds of powers. First, there are powers which are embodied in the nature of man. With regard to these, he offers no prayers to God. For instance, man never prays that his head may ever remain one and may never be transformed into two. Secondly, there are powers which he acquires by his own exertion or which he receives as a special gift from God and which distinguish him from his fellow beings. As these favours are subject to degeneration or diminution, he has to pray to God for their preservation, even though he may have received a promise from God that they will remain intact, for the prayer is also intended to signify that these gifts are not his personal possession but are God's special favours. It is for this reason that the Prophets never cease to pray to God even with regard to matters pertaining to their position or their function as God's Messengers. The prayer of the Holy Prophet asking for increase in knowledge (20:115) is a case in point. The prayers of the Prophets for استغفار (forgiveness) or their توبة (repentance) also belong to this class of prayers. These prayers do not show, as has been erroneously supposed, that the Prophets who offered these prayers were sinners. On the contrary, the prayers are offered so that the favours of God may continue to be conferred on them, for it is on the mercy and grace of God that their continuance depends. This is why the Quran repeatedly bids believers to repose their trust in God, for to whatever spiritual heights a man may attain, he must always rely on the help of God and not on his own powers, for there is always the possibility of his fall. Indeed, it is through their trust in God that the Faithful attain to perfection, and the constant confession of their own weaknesses combined with their dependence on God's help serves to protect them from backsliding.

1691. Commentary:

This verse shows Abraham to have been possessed of the love of his Creator in an unusually large measure, for he emphatically disowns those among his own children who would not worship the One Almighty God, though he offers an indirect

38. [a]Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House,—our Lord,—that they may observe Prayer. So make men's hearts incline towards them and [b]provide them with fruits, that they may be thankful.[1692]

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ
ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا
لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ فَاجْعَلْ اَفْـِٕدَةً مِّنَ
النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ
مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

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[a]22:27. [b]2:127; 28:58.

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prayer for their forgiveness also. Thus, incidentally, the verse teaches the great moral lesson that love of one's children should always be subject to certain limitations. It goes without saying that uncontrolled parental love not unoften leads to the moral and material ruin of children. Therefore, no feelings of love and attachment should be allowed to stand between God and man. But, as already stated, whereas in the earlier part of the verse Abraham disowns those of his children who should forsake his path, in the latter part he prays for Divine forgiveness for even such among his descendants as might have incurred God's displeasure by wrongdoing, for God's Prophets are full to overflowing of the milk of human kindness. Even when a believer is sometimes forced to sever his connection with some of his kinsmen and friends on account of their persistent disbelief, he continues to pray to God for them.

1692. Commentary:

In the previous verse, Abraham commenced his prayer by saying "My Lord" but in this verse, he has substituted "Our Lord" for "My Lord" i.e. in the present verse he has used the plural pronoun in place of the singular. The reason for this change is that in the latter case Abraham speaks of an act in which the will of Hagar and Ishmael was joined to his own. Although it was he himself who had made his wife and son settle in "an uncultivable valley," yet his wife and son had also shared in the sacrifice, for they had cheerfully cooperated with him and willingly signified their readiness to live in the wilderness in obedience to God's command. As three persons were concerned in the matter and they had all willingly submitted to the will of God, the plural pronoun has been used in the present verse.

The verse, by implication, refers to a vision of Abraham in which he saw that he was slaughtering his son, Ishmael (37:103). As the sacrifice of human beings was much in vogue at that time, Abraham set about literally to fulfil it. But the dream really meant that he was to settle his son in a barren valley; for to leave a young lad

39. Our Lord, certainly, [a]Thou knowest what we conceal and what we make known. And nothing whatsoever is hidden from Allah, whether in the earth or in the heaven.1693

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ تَعۡلَمُ مَا نُخۡفِیۡ وَمَا نُعۡلِنُ ؕ وَمَا یَخۡفٰی عَلَی اللّٰہِ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا فِی السَّمَآءِ ﴿۳۹﴾

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[a] 2:78; 3:6; 27:66.

at a place where there was no water, no vegetation and no sign of life was virtually tantamount to immolating him. However, when the literal interpretation of his dream by Abraham had actually caused him to lay Ishmael down and place the knife at his throat, Abraham was prohibited by God from doing so and thus the practice of offering human beings as sacrifice forever became banned to the followers of God.

By using the words, *that they may observe Prayer*, Abraham seeks to attract God's mercy by mentioning the noble object for which he had caused his offspring to dwell near the Sacred House. God accepted the prayer, for He sees the motives of man and He never allows a work done with good intention to go unrewarded.

After mentioning that he had caused his offspring to dwell in that barren valley so that they might establish the worship of God at the Sacred Mosque and thus fulfil the purpose for which it had been built, Abraham prays that "men's hearts might be inclined towards them", so that their preaching to them might prove effective and they might also join with them in worshipping God at the Holy Shrine and thus the purpose for which he had made his offspring dwell in that "bleak and barren valley" might be accomplished.

This prayer of Abraham found its complete fulfilment in the advent of the Holy Prophet; for before him it was only the Arabs who visited Mecca to offer their oblations but, after his advent, people from all over the world began to flock to the Holy House of God. The prayer also implied that the Ka'bah would one day become the centre of the worship of the One True God.

Nor did Abraham neglect the physical welfare of his offspring. He prayed that his descendants living in and around Mecca might have plenty of fruits. This prayer was made at a time when not a blade of grass was seen for many miles about that place. Still the prophecy met with fulfilment in a wonderful manner, for the choicest fruits come to Mecca in plenty and at all seasons. Spiritually, the hearts of nations have become extraordinarily drawn towards the House of God at Mecca, where pilgrims flock from all parts of the world. The latter part of the prophecy is waiting to be fulfilled on a yet grander scale, when Islam will have spread and dominated all over the world.

1693. Commentary:

This and the preceding verses speak

40. All praise belongs to Allah, Who has given me, despite *my* old age, Ishmael and Isaac. Surely, my Lord is the Hearer of Prayer.[1694]

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیۡ وَهَبَ لِیۡ عَلَی الۡکِبَرِ
اِسۡمٰعِیۡلَ وَ اِسۡحٰقَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّیۡ
لَسَمِیۡعُ الدُّعَآءِ ﴿۴۰﴾

of the nobility and purity of Abraham's motives in settling his wife and child in the uncultivable valley of Mecca. Thus, incidentally, they also constitute a refutation of the Biblical imputation against Abraham that he drove away Hagar and Ishmael in order to please Sarah (Gen. 21 :10,14). The charge has been proved to be false and baseless from the mouth of Abraham himself. He is spoken of in these verses as saying that the Omniscient God to Whom the inmost secrets of the human heart are known, was aware that he was not leaving Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness of Mecca in order to please any woman but to win the pleasure of God and that He might be worshipped in the Sacred House. In the pathetic words, *Our Lord, certainly Thou knowest what we conceal and what we make known*, Abraham calls on God to testify to the honesty of his motives.

By the words, *And nothing whatsoever is hidden from Allah, whether in the earth or in the heaven*, God testifies to the truth of Abraham's words, meaning that He knew the purity of Abraham's intentions in settling his wife and child in that bleak and barren place.

1694. Important Words:

اسماعیل (Ishmael), literally meaning "God heard the Prayer," was the eldest son of Abraham by his Egyptian wife, Hagar. He was born as a result of a prayer of Abraham when the latter was eighty-six years of age. In fulfilment of his dream in which he saw himself offering Ishmael as a sacrifice in the way of God, Abraham, being apprised by God, realized it was when he took the infant Ishmael and his mother Hagar to the wilderness of Arabia with a view to settling them in the barren and uncultivable valley of Mecca near the Sacred House of God. Twelve sons were born to Ishmael, the best known of whom is Kedar, the great ancestor of the Arab nation (Enc. Bib. & Jew. Enc.). See also 2:128-130.

اسحاق (Isaac) was the second son of Abraham by his wife, Sarah. He was the father of Jacob *alias* Israel, the great progenitor of the Israelites. He is known as "the Second Patriarch." He is considered by Jews and Christians to be that son of Abraham whom he offered to sacrifice in fulfilment of his dream. But the testimony of history and the Bible contradicts this assumption.

The expression of gratefulness to God on the part of Abraham for having been granted Ishmael and Isaac at a time when he was actually building the Ka'bah seems to be rather misplaced. But the fact is that

41. [a]My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children *too*. Our Lord! [b]*bestow Thy grace on me* and accept my prayer.[1695]

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَآءِ ﴿٤١﴾

42. [c]Our Lord, grant forgiveness to me and to my parents and to the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place.'[1696]

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٢﴾ ع ٧ ١٨

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[a]2:129. [b]2:128. [c]71:29.

Abraham, in this verse, does not praise God for merely granting him two sons. The real reason why he praised God for giving him Ishmael and Isaac was that he was able in his old age to build the Ka'bah with the help of one of them, and that he was leaving behind him two sons who would glorify God and establish His worship on the earth. He was glad that through his offspring he was enabled to make arrangements for the continuance of Divine worship in the world. This was the supreme object of his life and this was what he had been praying for. The verse also hints that, like Ishmael, Isaac was dedicated to the service of God.

Incidentally, the verse also throws interesting light on the sublimity of Abraham's character and the purity of his great soul. He had left his firstborn in the wilderness of the barren and bleak valley of Mecca, apparently to die of starvation, yet he was expressing his gratefulness to God for granting him Ishmael and Isaac, as if, by his settling the former near the Sacred House of God, the very object of the child's birth had been fulfilled.

1695. Commentary:

In v. 38, Abraham said that the purpose for which he was leaving his son and wife near the Sacred Mosque was that they might observe Prayer. In the present verse he prays to God that that purpose might be fulfilled and that they might, in the truest sense of the word, become observant of Prayer. He included himself also in the prayer because his own example was to be helpful to them in the attainment of that object. Abraham prayed that in the matter of Divine worship he might serve as an example to his offspring, while his offspring, in their turn, might set an example to others, and so on. So Abraham's prayer embodied in this verse meant that, through his progeny, the worship of God might become permanently established in the world. Thus this supplication of Abraham constituted not only a prayer but also an implied prophecy about the appearance of a Great Prophet in Mecca through whom Prayer was to be established as an institution in its completest and most enduring form.

1696. Important Words:

اغفرلی (grant forgiveness to me) is

derived from غفر which means, (1) to cover up; and (2) to forgive sins (Aqrab). See also 2:59, 200, 286.

Commentary:

The prayer offered in the expression اغفرلى (grant forgiveness to me) conveys different meanings when offered by God's Prophets and when offered by ordinary sinful men. When a Prophet or a holy man seeks God's غفران or مغفرة (forgiveness), the word signifies God's covering him with His mercy and protecting him against the harmful consequences of human weaknesses. But when a sinful man prays to God in the words اللهم اغفرلى (My Lord, grant forgiveness to me), he, in fact, prays to Him for protection against the evil consequences of his sins and the punishment he has earned thereby as well as protection from the commission of further sins. It is one of the characteristics of the Arabic language that its words possess a large variety of meanings and that not unoften the same word conveys different meanings in different circumstances. The word غفر is similarly used in many senses. When used about a righteous man it conveys a different meaning from that in which it is used about a person of sinful character. That the significance of a word is changed with the change of the person for whom it is used and the change of the occasion on which it is used is well illustrated by the word جبار. When used with reference to God this word means, "the Restorer of a thing to a right or sound condition," but when used with reference to a human being it means, "one who is extravagant in acts of disobedience or wrongdoing" (Lane).

Since the Prophets are God's beloved and His Elect, Satan can have no access to them. They are the special servants of God, and over God's own servants Satan has no power (15:43), for they live under His constant protection. The reason, therefore, why the Prophets of God pray to Him for غفران or مغفرة, notwithstanding their enjoying protection against Satan, is their realization of the Holiness and Majesty of God and of their own human weakness. They realize that, however high a man may spiritually rise, he is but a mere nothing before Almighty God, Lord and Master of the Throne of Glory and Majesty. They realize that man is but a weak and frail creature of God, that his very existence is a Divine gift and that it is from God that he receives guidance and protection. It is this realization of human weakness which makes them humbly pray to God that He may "cover" them with His grace and mercy so that their very self may become completely obliterated and merged in Him.

The verse further hints that God's reckoning is not confined to the next life but is also going on in the present life. The Prophets, therefore, always pray that whenever the time may come for the results of their works to become known and manifest, God may cover up their weaknesses and produce results in accordance with His Own glory and not their weak and humble efforts. As for the believers and the parents of Abraham

R. 7.

43. And think not that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only gives them respite till the day on which the eyes will fixedly stare,[1697]

44. Hurrying on in fright, raising up their heads, their gaze not returning to them, and their minds *utterly* void.[1698]

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيْهِ الْاَبْصَارُ ۙ﴿۴۳﴾

مُهْطِعِيْنَ مُقْنِعِيْ رُءُوْسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ اِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ ۚ وَاَفْـِٕدَتُهُمْ هَوَآءٌ ؕ﴿۴۴﴾

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the expression مغفرة will be taken in its ordinary meaning of forgiveness of sins and meting out merciful treatment. For an explanation of the words والد and اب used with reference to Abraham see under 6:75.

1697. Important Words:

تشخص (will fixedly stare) is derived from شخص which means, he or it rose; or, he or it became raised. شخص النجم means, the star rose and became visible on the horizon. They say شخص بصره i.e. his eyes became fixedly open; his eyes became raised; or his sight became stretched and raised. شخص الميت بصره means, the dying man raised his eyes, which became fixedly open. The Arabs say شخص به امر i.e. something happened to him and disquieted him as though he were raised from the ground by reason of his disquietude (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

With the preceding verse ended the prayer of Abraham, which was meant as an introduction for reverting to the subject of the Holy Prophet. Abraham had prayed that the worship of the One God might be established in Mecca through his progeny, particularly the Holy Prophet for whose appearance he had prayed to God (2:130). The conquest of Mecca, in which lay the Sacred House which had been built for the worship of the One God but which had now become the centre of idolatry, alone could fulfil this prayer. So the Holy Prophet is told here that he should not think that God is unaware of the actions of his enemies, who are now holding the House of God and are leaving no stone unturned to check the spread of Islam. He will certainly destroy the idolaters and establish His own worship in the land. The respite which was being granted to the Meccans was intended to afford them an opportunity to repent and mend their ways; and if they did not do so the day was not far off when, owing to the sudden consternation caused by Divine punishment, "the eyes will fixedly stare" in bewilderment. This graphic picture of the Fall of Mecca is continued in the following verse.

1698. Important Words:

مهطعين (hurrying on in fright) is derived from اهطع which is derived

45. And warn men of the day when *the promised* chastisement will come upon them, and [a]the wrongdoers will say, ‘Our Lord, grant us respite for a short term. We will respond to Thy call and will follow the Messengers.’ ‘Did you not swear before this *that* you would have no fall?**1699**

وَاَنۡذِرِ النَّاسَ یَوۡمَ یَاۡتِیۡهِمُ الۡعَذَابُ
فَیَقُوۡلُ الَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا رَبَّنَاۤ اَخِّرۡنَاۤ اِلٰۤی
اَجَلٍ قَرِیۡبٍ ۙ نُّجِبۡ دَعۡوَتَکَ وَنَتَّبِعِ
الرُّسُلَ ؕ اَوَلَمۡ تَکُوۡنُوۡۤا اَقۡسَمۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ
قَبۡلُ مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ زَوَالٍ ﴿۴۵﴾

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[a]63:11.

from هطع. They say هطع الرجل i.e. the man came running in fright; or the man advanced with his eyes fixed on something from which he did not raise them. اهطع البعير means, the camel stretched forth its neck and lowered its head. اهطع الرجل also means, the man looked with humility and humbleness (Aqrab).

مقنعى (raising up) is derived from اقنع which is derived from قنع. They say قنع الجبل i.e. he mounted the hill. اقنع رأسه means, he raised up his head and fixed it straight, turning neither to the right nor to the left (Aqrab). هواء (utterly void) is derived from هوى which means, it fell from a high level to a low level; or contrarily, it rose and went up. الهواء means, the firmament; an empty thing; a void; coward, because his heart is, as it were, empty, having no courage (Aqrab).

Commentary:

What a graphic picture of the Fall of Mecca! The great prophecy of the final triumph of the Holy Prophet and the utter discomfiture of his enemies was wonderfully fulfilled by the Fall of Mecca when the Sacred House of God passed into the hands of the Muslims for all time. This verse gives a graphic description of the bewilderment and consternation of the Meccans when they suddenly found the Holy Prophet at the very gates of Mecca with an army ten thousand strong, without their having the least inkling of his coming. For proof of the fact that the eyes of the Meccans became actually fixed in a stare and their minds were literally void and they ran about in fright with their heads raised in bewilderment, one has only to turn to any book of history about the Fall of Mecca.

1699. Commentary:

This verse speaks of the punishment that is to overtake disbelievers in the life to come. Whenever the Quran speaks of the punishment of the present life, it usually refers to the punishment of the next life also, for the former constitutes evidence of the latter.

46. And you dwell in the dwellings of those who wronged themselves, and it has become plain to you how We dealt with them: and We have set forth *clear* parables for you.'**1700**

وَّ سَكَنْتُمْ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ
وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْاَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٦﴾

47. And [a]they have already designed *all* their designs; and their designs are with Allah. And even though their designs be such as to make the mountains move, *they cannot succeed.***1701**

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
مَكْرُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ
مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ﴿٤٧﴾

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[a] 3:55; 8:31; 13:43; 27:51.

The words, *Did you not swear before this that you would have no fall*? show that disbelievers were confident that their prosperity would endure forever. This led to their becoming haughty and arrogant.

1700. Important Words:

امثال (clear parables) is the plural of مثل (*mathal*) or مثل (*mithal*) and is derived from the verb مثل (*mathala*). مثل فلانا means, he became like such a one. مثل فلانا بفلان means, he likened or compared such a one with such a one. مثل (*mathal*) or مثل (*mithal*) means, (1) a description, condition, state, case etc.; (2) argument; (3) discourse, as in بسط له مثلا i.e. he lengthened to him his discourse; (4) lesson or example, as فجعلنا هم سلفا و مثلا للاخرين i.e. We made them a precedent and an example to coming generations (43:57); (5) a proverb, as they say تمثل البيت او باالبيت i.e. he used the verse as a proverb; (6) a sign, as in جعلناه مثلا لبنى اسرائيل (43:60) i.e. We made him (Jesus) a sign to the children of Israel (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:18, 107; 6:39.

Commentary:

Many people dwell in or near the places where by-gone peoples, now ruined, dwelt before them, yet they do not benefit by their example and refuse to believe till they themselves are punished.

1701. Important Words:

ان (even though) gives a number of meanings such as, if; though; even though, etc. It is also sometimes used to express negation i.e. not (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, *they have already designed all their designs*, mean that disbelievers did all that lay in their power and left no stone unturned and no plan untried to bring the Holy Prophet to grief.

48. Think not then that [a]Allah will fail to keep His promise to His Messengers. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution.1702

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ؕ ﴿٤٨﴾

49. On the day when this earth will be changed into another earth, and the heavens *too*; and they will *all* appear before Allah, the One, the Most Supreme;1703

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ
وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ
الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٩﴾

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[a] 3:195; 10:104; 58:22.

The expression, *their designs are with Allah*, means that God knows their designs full well and, as it is God Who produces the result of men’s actions, He will frustrate their designs. The words "their designs" may also be taken to mean the designs of God concerning disbelievers. In this case the expression would mean that the designs which God will employ against the disbelievers are all with Him and He will carry them into effect as and when He deems fit. The words عند الله مكرهم may also mean, "the punishment of their designs is with Allah," for sometimes a word is repeated to signify the punishment thereof. See 2:16.

The word جبال (mountains), as already explained, also means, "great difficulties or insurmountable obstacles" (13:32). Taken in this sense, the verse would mean that though the designs of disbelievers against Islam are such that they can remove mountain-like obstacles yet, as disbelievers seek to frustrate God’s purpose, they will not succeed in their nefarious designs.

If the particle ان be taken in the sense of "not" (see Important Words), then the words ان كان مكرهم لتزول منه الجبال would mean, "and their designs are (surely) not such as to move mountains."

1702. Commentary:

The verse is addressed to the reader or to each and every individual from among the enemies of Islam. The Divine attributes mentioned in the verse refer to those enemies of Islam who were bent upon extirpating the small Muslim community. God assures the Holy Prophet that He will certainly punish those who seek to destroy Islam and will make the cause of truth triumph.

1703. Commentary:

The verse speaks of the great Day of Judgement in the next world, when new heavens and a new earth will come into existence. The attributes of "One" and "Supreme" have been

50. And [a]thou wilt see the guilty on that day bound in chains.1704

وَ تَرَى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ فِي الْاَصْفَادِ ۚ﴿۵۰﴾

51. Their garments will be of pitch, and [b]the fire will envelop their faces.1705

سَرَابِيْلُهُمْ مِّنْ قَطِرَانٍ وَّ تَغْشٰى وُجُوْهَهُمُ النَّارُ ۙ﴿۵۱﴾

[a]38:39. [b]10:28; 23:105; 54:49.

mentioned in this verse to point out that on that dreadful day all the false deities of the disbelievers will forsake them and disbelievers will realize that all government rests in God alone.

Incidentally, the verse also shows that the blessings of the next life will be quite different from those of the present life; for, as the verse says, the present earth and the present heavens will be changed into a new earth and new heavens in the next world. If the same or similar earth and heavens were to be created again, in the next world, with the same fruits and the same material boons, where was the need to change the old ones?

1704. Important Words:

مقرنين (bound) is derived from قرن (qarrana) which is derived from قرن (qarana). They say قرن بين الشيء و الشيء i.e. he brought or placed the two things together. قرن الشيء با لشيء means, he bound the thing with the other, placing them together قرنه (qarrana-hu) means, he collected the thing together and bound it. The Arabs say قرنت الاسارٰى فى الحبال i.e. the captives were bound together with ropes (Aqrab).

الاصفاد (chains) is the plural of الصفد which means: (1) a chain or anything with which a thing is bound or tied; (2) favour or gift bestowed on someone, perhaps because it, as it were, binds the receiver to the giver (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The rewards and punishments of the life to come will represent the disbelievers' actions in the present life. As in this world sinners commit their deeds at the instigation or with the help of each other, therefore, in the life to come, they will be represented as shackled and bound together, the chains representing the misdeeds of the sinful.

1705. Important Words:

قطران (pitch) is derived from قطر meaning, it dropped; or it dripped or fell in drops; or it flowed drop by drop. قطران means, tar or liquid pitch; what exudes from juniper or savin and from pine-tree and the like when subjected to the action of fire; قطران is used for smearing mangy camels (Lane).

Commentary:

The garment serves as a means of protection, but the garment of disbelievers in the next world shall be

52. [a]*It will be so* that Allah may requite each soul for what it has wrought. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning.**1706**

لِيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۵۲﴾

53. [b]This is a sufficient admonition for mankind *that they may benefit by it*, and that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that He is the only One God, and that those possessed of understanding may ponder.**1707**

هٰذَا بَلٰغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنْذَرُوْا بِهٖ
وَلِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ
وَّلِيَذَّكَّرَ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿۵۳﴾ ٧ ع ١١ ١٩

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[a]40:18; 45:23; 74:39. [b]5:68; 6:20.

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pitch, which means that they will have nothing to protect them from fire. Fire itself will, as it were, constitute their garment and the pitch will add to the torment.

1706. Commentary:

The word "earned" shows that God will reward disbelievers according to their works.

For the expression, *swift at reckoning*, see 13:42.

1707. Important Words:

بلاغ (a sufficient admonition) is derived from بلغ. They say بلغ المكان i.e. he reached, or arrived at the place. بلاغ signifies the reaching, attaining, arriving at or coming to a thing. Being a substantive from تبليغ and ابلاغ it also means, the conveyance, delivery or communication of a message. It often occurs in the Quran as meaning the communication or announcement of what is revealed. بلاغ also means that which is conveyed (i.e. message, etc.); also what suffices of sustenance. The words هذا بلاغ للناس mean, this Quran contains a sufficient exposition or demonstration for men (Lane).

Commentary:

The sentence, *This is a sufficient admonition for mankind*, means that the truth has been properly communicated and brought home to men by means of this Book, and now it rests with them to accept or reject it.

The words, *that they may know that He is the only One God*, refer to those who are groping in error. The Quran has been revealed that it may warn such people of their error and that they may know that there is no God other than Allah. The words, *that those possessed of understanding may ponder*, refer to those who have accepted guidance. For such the Quran has been revealed that they may make further progress in their knowledge and in guidance. The

Quran thus serves the twofold purpose of destruction and construction, both of which go hand in hand. On the one hand, it warns erring people of their errors; and, on the other, it exhorts those who have been shown the right path to make further progress in wisdom and knowledge. It does not only abrogate previous Laws but also lays down a complete and constructive programme of life for mankind.

CHAPTER 15

AL-ḤIJR

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation

The consensus of scholarly opinion is that the whole *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Abū Ḥayyān says that this *Sūrah* is Meccan without any difference of opinion among the commentators of the Quran (Muḥīṭ). It is remarkable that the *Sūrah* deals with a question, the importance of which is enhanced by the fact of its having been revealed at Mecca.

Connection with the Preceding *Sūrah*

In the preceding *Sūrah* it was pointed out that the former Prophets possessed no material means, yet they succeeded in their mission because they had the Word of God to guide and help them. So will the Holy Prophet succeed in his mission. The Word of God, the *Sūrah* emphatically declares, is a great force before which nothing can stand. The forging of lies against God is no easy thing because an impostor and a forger of lies against God soon meets his deserved end. Thus it is shown that the Quran is the revealed word of God and possesses irrefutable proofs to establish its Divine origin.

Subject Matter

The basic theme of the *Sūrah* is that no Scripture can approach the Quran in beauty and grandeur. It is a book *par excellence*. It stands unequalled and unrivalled. Its beauties and excellences are so many and so obvious that even disbelievers on many occasions are forced to admit that they have nothing like the Quran and wish that they too had possessed a book like it. In spite of this confession on the part of disbelievers about the unrivalled superiority of the Quran, they do not see their way to accept it and do not realize that by their hesitancy to accept the Quran, they would become permanently deprived of truth and would draw upon their heads the displeasure and punishment of God. As the Quran has been revealed for the guidance of mankind, its Message is bound to succeed and nothing can stand in its way. Those who hesitate or refuse to accept it will themselves be the sufferers.

The *Sūrah* proceeds to say that if the Quran is ridiculed and treated with contempt, it is nothing to be wondered at, for the revelations of previous Prophets also were held up to scorn. But the scoffers do not appreciate this simple and patent fact that it is no easy thing to forge lies against God because to do so is to invite sure destruction. The All-Powerful God sees to it that lies are not forged against Him and that a forgery becomes easily distinguishable from His revealed word. He vouchsafes to His word a special distinction and eminence and creates a favourable atmosphere for its acceptance by right-thinking men and raises those who accept it from a low to a very high level of moral excellence.

The *Sūrah* continues to argue that, like the revelations of past Prophets, the Quran is an invaluable treasure of spiritual knowledge, and like them, its ideals and principles are bound to triumph and prevail. Towards the close of the *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is told not to mind the opposition of disbelievers because this opposition is going to recoil upon them. He is further enjoined to distribute the Quranic treasures among the Faithful and to continue his efforts to wean disbelievers from their evil ways and to pray to God, for it is through prayer that the way for the dissemination of Quranic teachings and ideals will open.

رکوعاتها ٦ سُوۡرَۃُ الۡحِجۡرِ مَکِّیَّۃٌ ١٥ اٰیاتها ١٠٠

(AL-ḤIJR)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.1708

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ①

2. [b]Alif Lām Rā. [c]These are verses of the Book and of the illuminating Quran.1709

الٓرٰ ۟ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ وَ قُرۡاٰنٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ②

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[a]1:1. [b]10:2; 11:2; 12:2; 13:2; 14:2. [c]27:2; 31:3.

1708. Commentary:

See 1:1.

1709. Commentary:

For the abbreviated letters see 2:2.

The word مبین (illuminating), meaning (1) to make plain and (2) to be plain, signifies both that which makes other things plain and that which is plain itself. In 12:2, the word has been used in the first-mentioned sense, while in the verse under comment it has been used in the latter sense, which signifies that the Quran itself bears testimony to its truth.

It is worthy of note that the Word of God sent to the Holy Prophet is spoken of here both as کتاب (that which is written) and قرآن (that which is read), to indicate that it will be preserved both, through writing and reading. And this has in fact been so. For, of all revealed Scriptures, the Quran alone has been preserved by its verses having been committed to writing as soon as they were revealed and also by its having been committed to memory by hundreds of thousands of Muslims during the past fourteen centuries. The practice of committing the Quran to memory has continued among Muslims since the time of the Holy Prophet, and in every age there have been thousands of Muslims who could recite from memory the whole of it—a distinction shared by no other revealed Book. Even if all copies of the Quran were lost, it would not disappear from the face of the earth, for it is indelibly inscribed on the memories of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from one end of the earth to the other. Thus has the Divine promise made in v. 10 below met with wonderful fulfilment.

One more point is worthy of special note here. Only at two places in the Quran do the words کتاب (Book) and قرآن (Quran) occur together viz. in 27:2 and in the verse under comment. In the present verse the word کتاب (Book) precedes the word قرآن (Quran), while in 27:2 the order has been reversed. As stated above the word کتاب (Book), implies a prophecy that the Holy Book of Islam will continue to be written, and the word قرآن (Quran), points to the prophecy that it will continue to be increasingly read and recited. Now whereas in the present verse the word مبین

3. Often will the disbelievers wish that they were Muslims.[1710]

رُبَمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ كَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ③

(illuminating) qualifies the word قرآن (Quran), in 27:2 it qualifies the word کتاب. This shows that the subject matter of the present *Sūrah* deals more with the attribute implied in the word قرآن (Quran) than with the attribute implied in the word کتاب (Book). But in 27:2 the order has been reversed, because in that *Sūrah* greater emphasis is laid on the changes which are to be brought about by the Quran as a کتاب (A written Book).

In the present *Sūrah*, accounts of the lives of those Prophets (e.g. Adam, Abraham, Lot, Ṣāliḥ) have been given in whose time the art of writing either had not been invented or was not common, and knowledge was acquired and preserved mostly by oral recitation and verbal transmission; while in the 27th *Sūrah* have been given accounts of the lives of those Prophets (e.g. Moses and David) in whose time writing had come into vogue and learning, instead of being acquired by heart, was acquired by means of the written word.

It is also worthy of note that whereas the words قرآن مبین (Illuminating Quran) have been used in the Quran only twice, the words کتاب مبین (Illuminating Book) have been used no less than twelve times. This is to hint that a record in writing is much more useful than mere oral transmission. Muslims should therefore pay more attention to education and to the study of written knowledge.

1710. Important Words:

ربما (often) is composed of two parts, رب and ما, the former being used both in the accented and non-accented form i.e. as *rubba* and *ruba*. ربما is used both in the sense of "sometimes" and "often" as the context may indicate, though the former is more frequent. Similarly, the word may either refer to the past or to the future (Aqrab & Tāj).

Commentary:

According to the different meanings of ربما the verse under comment may mean: "It has often or sometimes happened (or it will often or sometimes happen) that disbelievers have desired (or will desire) that they had been Muslims." In the present verse the word has been used in the sense of "often."

The verse applies to disbelievers in two ways. Firstly, it means that when believers attain success, disbelievers will wish they had been Muslims so that they too had shared in it. Secondly, it refers to the good and beneficial teachings of Islam and means that when disbelievers see how greatly Muslims had benefited by the teachings of the Quran, they will feel a desire that they too had been Muslims that they might have similarly benefited by the Quranic teachings. It is on record that such a

4. [a]Leave them alone that they may eat and enjoy themselves and that vain hope may beguile them; but they will soon know.[1711]

ذَرْهُمْ يَأْكُلُوْا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوْا وَيُلْهِهِمُ الْاَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ④

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[a] 47:13.

desire was actually expressed by some disbelievers in the time of the Holy Prophet.

Even among present-day non-Muslims there are some who entertain such a desire, for they are often confronted with problems for which their own religions provide no true solution and they have perforce to adopt the remedies and measures prescribed by the Quran in order to meet them. For instance, when a Christian people have to pass laws permitting divorce for reasons other than adultery, or when they have to enact laws intended to put an end to the evil of drinking alcohol, they must feel how good it would have been if their own religion had given them the same teachings regarding these matters as Islam had done. In India, too, Hindus are adopting some of the social laws of Islam. This adoption of the Islamic laws by non-Muslims constitutes an irrefutable testimony to the truth of the statement made in the verse under comment.

It is also worthy of note that the Quran uses the word يود (wish) and not يقول (say), thus hinting that though disbelievers might not confess to such a desire, yet in their heart of hearts they not unoften wish that their religion had also laid down institutions like those of Islam. The use of the word ربما (often or sometimes) also indicates that owing to their biased mentality disbelievers would not feel such a desire with regard to all the teachings of Islam but only with regard to some of them.

1711. Commentary:

This verse supplies the answer to the question which naturally arises from the claim made by the Quran in the preceding verse. If, as has been claimed, disbelievers really feel an admiration for the teachings of Islam, what prevents them from accepting it and entering its fold? The answer is that it is only social obligations and the pursuit of materialistic benefits that stand in the way of their accepting Islam. This is what is hinted at in the words, *Leave them alone that they may eat and enjoy themselves.*

The verse incidentally hints that simple living and curtailment of worldly ambitions materially help a man to understand and accept the truth. The words, *Leave them alone that they may eat and enjoy themselves and that vain hope may beguile them*, also contain the hint that disbelievers in their struggle against the Holy Prophet would strive

5. And We have never destroyed any town but there was for it a known decree.[1712]

وَمَآ اَهۡلَكۡنَا مِنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَّعۡلُوۡمٌ ﴿۵﴾

6. [a]No people can outstrip their appointed time, nor can they remain behind.

مَا تَسۡبِقُ مِنۡ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسۡتَاۡخِرُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾

7. And they said, [b]'O thou to whom this Exhortation has been sent down, thou art surely a madman.[1713]

وَقَالُوۡا يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِىۡ نُزِّلَ عَلَيۡهِ الذِّكۡرُ اِنَّكَ لَمَجۡنُوۡنٌ ﴿۷﴾

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[a]7:35; 10:50; 16:62. [b]37:37; 44:15; 68:52.

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to increase their influence with the people by extending to them their hospitality, and by accumulating means of worldly enjoyment as well as by their deep-laid and long drawn-out schemes against Islam, but that all their efforts would prove futile and success would finally come to the Holy Prophet, much to the chagrin of disbelievers.

The verse also suggests that the wish of disbelievers mentioned in the last verse—that they had been Muslims—is simply a "vain hope" i.e. a mere passing wish, their real desire being the pursuit of worldly enjoyment and material gain. Such passing desires could yield no profit. It is only the serious and honest desires of a man that can be of any use to him.

1712. Commentary:

In this verse the word "town" stands for the people to whom a Prophet is sent. The town of the Holy Prophet is called ام القرىٰ (the mother of towns) in the Quran. When the mother is visited by Divine punishment, the other places which are, as it were, its children must also share its fate. This is why in the present age, which has witnessed the advent of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, calamities and disasters of diverse kinds have visited the world, because like his Master, the Holy Prophet of Islam, he too was raised for the whole of mankind.

The term "known decree" here means the time appointed for the destruction of the opponents of a Prophet and predicted by him. To the opponents of a Prophet punishment comes only after it has been foretold by him.

1713. Important Words:

الذکر (this Exhortation) is derived from ذکر (*dhakara*). They say ذکرہ i.e. he remembered it; he preserved it in his memory; he talked of it. ذکر (*dhikr*) means, remembrance; the presence of a thing in the mind; memory; the mention or relating of a thing; the

8. [a]'Why dost thou not bring angels to us, if thou art of the truthful?'1714

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِيْنَا بِالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝٨

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[a] 6:9; 11:13; 25:8.

praise and glorification of God; praise or eulogy of another; dispraise or evil speech; a thing that is current upon the tongue; fame, renown or reputation, as they say له ذكر في الناس i.e. he has fame among the people; eminence, nobility or honour; a book containing an exposition of religion and an institution of religious laws; any Book of a Prophet and especially the Quran, also the Torah; an exhortation, an admonition or a warning (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:41, 153, 201 & 6:69.

Commentary:

الذكر i.e. Exhortation or Eminence being one of the names of the Quran (21:51), the verse shows that this name was well-known to disbelievers. The calling of the Quran by the name الذكر also implied a prophecy that it was to prove a means of bringing special eminence to its followers. God says with reference to the Quran, فيه ذكركم (wherein lies your own honour, 21:11). See Important Words. Disbelievers, however, used this word ironically, as the epithets العزيز (the mighty) and الكريم (the honourable) have been used ironically about them in 44:50.

The words, "madman," contain an allusion to v. 3 wherein it is said that disbelievers will often wish that they had been Muslims. When that verse was revealed, the condition of Muslims was so weak and that of their enemies so strong that, when the latter heard the claim made about them in the above verse, they simply laughed at it and declared that only a madman could make such foolish claims.

Disbelievers used the word الذكر (Exhortation or Eminence) for the Quran with a view to ridiculing the idea of its being a means of honour for Muslims. They knew that they had subjected Muslims to bitter persecution and in their arrogance thought that they would speedily crush them. So in the existing circumstances it was quite natural on their part to say that it was mere madness to say that the Quran would raise Muslims to such eminence that disbelievers themselves would begin to desire that they had been Muslims.

The word مجنون (a madman) has been erroneously rendered by some translators as "possessed by a devil or by a jinn" or simply "possessed." It does not mean that but "a mad or insane person" or "one whose intellectual faculties are impaired" (Lane & Aqrab).

1714. Commentary:

In the previous *Sūrahs* and also in the beginning of the present *Sūrah* it has been claimed that the victory of Islam will be brought about through Divine revelation vouchsafed to the

9. [a]We do not send down angels but by due right, and then they are granted no respite.[1715]

مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوْٓا اِذًا مُّنْظَرِيْنَ ⑨

10. Verily, [b]We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.[1716]

اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ⑩

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[a]6:9. [b]36:70; 65:11.

Holy Prophet. In answer to this claim, disbelievers dubbed the Holy Prophet a madman, tauntingly saying that, as he claimed that his revelations were brought to him by angels, the latter ought to have been visible to other men also. Since nobody ever saw these angels it was evident that he suffered from hallucinations and that his mind was affected.

1715. Commentary:

The word حق (due right) here signifies either (1) the True Word of God, or (2) the due right. In the former sense the verse signifies that as angels descend with the true Word of God, therefore they descend only on His chosen Messengers. But as disbelievers who demanded the appearance of angels (see the preceding verse) were neither Divine Messengers nor deserved a Divine Message, angels could not possibly descend on them.

According to the second meaning of the word حق the verse would mean that the only angels who could descend on disbelievers could only be angels of punishment; for angels only descend according to due right i.e. they bring down mercy for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. In this case, when the angels of punishment came, disbelievers would be granted no respite and would be destroyed.

It may also be incidentally noted here that revelation varies in quality according to the spiritual condition of the recipient. Just as there is a great difference between the quality of the revelation received by a Prophet and that received by an ordinary believer, the Word of God revealed to different Prophets also varies in quality according to their respective capacities and the degree of their spiritual status. Hence it is that the Perfect Word of God, viz. the Quran, was revealed to the Holy Prophet, the Greatest and most Perfect of all Divine Messengers.

1716. Commentary:

This verse furnishes a powerful proof of the truth of the Quran and of its Divine origin. In fact, the promise about the preservation of the Quran made in this verse has been so remarkably fulfilled that even if there had been no other proof of the truth of Islam, this alone would have sufficed to establish its Divine origin.

Verse 8 contains the demand mockingly made by disbelievers that if the Quran were really as grand a Book as it was claimed to be, it ought to have descended under the guardianship of angels. This ridicule of disbelievers has been answered in the present verse, which emphatically says that the Quran is indeed a sublime Book and that God Himself has undertaken to act as its Guardian and that He will always protect it against every kind of corruption and interference. And in order that this promise about the protection of the Quran may gain still more force, particles expressive of special emphasis, such as انا (verily We) and نحن (Ourself) and again انا followed by ل (most surely) have been used in this verse. Thus the claim has been made in the most emphatic and forceful language.

The statement that God Himself is the Guardian of the Quran does not mean that angels do not guard it. They also do so, for when the master himself is guarding a thing, the servants must also be necessarily engaged in that service. By saying, *most surely We will be its Guardian*, God, however, points to the fact that there are certain peculiarities of the Quran which it is beyond the power of angels to guard and, therefore, God Himself has undertaken to do that work.

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. According to Ibn Hishām, it was revealed in the fourth year of the Holy Prophet's ministry. Sprenger, Rodwell and Nöldeke all agree that it belongs to the Meccan period. Now it is a well-known fact that during the Meccan period, the life of the Holy Prophet and his followers was extremely precarious. They did not even know how to save themselves or where to hide themselves. For no less than three years the Prophet and his few helpless followers were virtually imprisoned in the *Shi'b* (valley) of Abū Ṭālib from where they could not venture out. They were under a ban. Is it not then astonishing that when the very lives of Muslims were in peril and the enemy was so strong that he could easily crush the new Faith, disbelievers were challenged to do all that lay in their power to destroy the Quran, and were told that God would frustrate all their designs because He Himself was its Guardian? The challenge was open and unequivocal and the enemy strong and ruthless. But what was the result? The Prophet and his Companions not only remained safe and sound but thrived and prospered and the number of converts continued to swell and the Quran remained safe against all corruption and has ever continued to enjoy perfect security. This distinctive feature of the Quran has not been shared by any other book revealed to any other Prophet.

Sir William Muir, the well-known critic of Islam, says about the Quran: "We may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse in the Quran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Mohammad himself." Again, "There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess the text which Mohammad himself gave forth and used." Again, "To compare (as the Muslims are fond of doing) their pure text with the various readings of our Scriptures, is to compare things between which there is no analogy." (Introduction to "The Life of Mahomet"). Prof. Nöldeke, the great German Orientalist writes as follows: "Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Quran of Othman contains none but genuine elements, though sometimes in very strange order. Efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Quran have failed." (Enc. Brit.). Professor Nicholson, says in his "Literary History of the Arabs": "Here (in the Quran) we have materials of unique and incontestable authority for tracing the origin and early development of Islam—such materials as do not exist in the case of Buddhism or Christianity or any other ancient religion."

The importance of this security of the Quranic text is further enhanced when we compare it with other revealed Scriptures. The Quran was revealed among an illiterate people, while most other Scriptures were revealed among peoples who were comparatively more literate and therefore better qualified to preserve the purity of their Scriptures. Yet they failed to do so, while the Quran, the most widely read of all revealed Scriptures, enjoys complete immunity from all sorts of corruption. This miraculous preservation of the Quranic text is no mere accident. It has been brought about by the special providence of God in accordance with an openly declared prophecy of the Quran.

The means adopted to safeguard the purity of the text of the Quran have been briefly referred to in verse 2 in the memorable words الكتاب (the Written Book) and قرآن مبين (the Illuminating Recital) signifying: (a) That every verse of the Quran was committed to writing as soon as it was revealed and this writing was most tenaciously preserved. (b) That it was committed to memory as soon as revealed by a number of Muslims. And this pious practice has increasingly continued so much so that in the past centuries hundreds of thousands of Muslims have had the entire Quran literally on the tips of their tongues. Add to this the fact that from the very beginning of Islam the recital of parts of the Quran in the five daily Prayers was made obligatory.

The following additional factors also very materially contributed to the preservation of the Quran:

(1) God has inspired the Muslims with an extraordinary love for the Quran. They enjoy the reading of the Book even if they do not understand the meaning of the text. This leads to its being preserved in their hearts.

(2) The rhythm of the Quran is so sweet and its language so charming and so easy to learn and the construction of its sentences so beautiful that it can be committed to memory with great ease.

(3) God so ordained that immediately after the Quranic revelation became complete, it spread

far and wide, to the remotest corners of the world, among all nations and all peoples, so that it became practically impossible for anyone to tamper with its text.

(4) From the beginning the Quran formed for Muslims the basis of all the sciences and learning they acquired and developed with a view to serving it. Various branches of knowledge such as Grammar, Rhetoric, History, Philosophy and Logic were cultivated and developed by Muslims for the sake of a better understanding of their holy Book.

(5) God has preserved Arabic, the language of the Quran, as a living language, while the languages of all other revealed Books, which were not meant to last forever, have become practically dead.

Again, it is not only the text of the Quran that has been preserved intact by God. He has provided for the preservation of its spirit also. This has been done by raising divinely inspired Reformers among the Muslims from time to time. These Reformers, known in Islamic terminology as *Mujaddids*, receive revelations from God and interpret and explain the true meaning of the Quranic text. Such Reformers appeared among the followers of other religions also, but that was only for so long as such scriptures served as guides for their followers. After the advent of Islam, however, all other religious systems and their scriptures, which were intended only for specific periods and specific peoples, became abrogated and divinely inspired Reformers ceased to appear among them. Now, therefore, the Quran alone among all revealed Scriptures of the world holds the field as a living Book and hence divinely inspired Reformers now appear only among the followers of Islam. In our own time God has raised Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement, to demonstrate the truth and excellence of the Quran in a manner unparalleled in the history of Islam. Aḥmad's presentation of Islam is not like one praying for a hearing, as was the vogue among the apologetic school of Muslim writers, but as a victor challenging the protagonists of all other religious systems and the so-called Modernists and Higher Critics to find fault with any teaching of Islam; and also as a judge passing his judgement upon them. The appearance of such Reformers in itself constitutes proof of the living power of a religion and its Scripture inasmuch as they are really the fruit of their religion and their appearance proves its efficacy.

The question here arises, if the Scriptures revealed to the previous Prophets have not been preserved in their original purity, what guarantee is there to believe that the Quran would enjoy permanent security? In this connection it should be noted that the promise of protection made by God in this verse mentions the word الذكر (rendered in the text as "this Exhortation") and not the Quran or any other word; and herein lies the answer to the above question. For, to become deserving of the permanent protection of God it is essential that

11. And We sent *Messengers* before thee among parties of ancient *peoples*.[1717]

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ فِیۡ شِیَعِ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ⑪

the Divine revelation should be الذكر of which the necessary attributes are: (1) that it should establish a close and permanent relationship between man and his Maker, inspiring in the former constant remembrance of God, the word ذِكر meaning remembering; and (2) that it should elevate man to a state where God may also remember him or in other words favour him with His words and with heavenly help, the word ذِكر also means eminence. The verse under comment thus purports to mean that God undertakes to protect any Scripture so long as it serves the above two purposes. But when, through changes in the conditions and circumstances of man, any Scripture ceases to perform these functions and God, in His infallible wisdom, deems it necessary to reveal another Scripture, He naturally ceases to extend His protection to earlier revelations. The question as to when any particular Scripture at any particular time ceases to serve the above-mentioned purposes has to be decided on facts. It is a fact beyond doubt that at the present time no religion other than Islam can claim that there is among its followers anyone who fulfils in his person the conditions mentioned above, viz. attainment of such nearness to God that God begins to speak to him and manifests His special powers for his sake. Such a claim can be made only by a follower of the Quran. As stated above Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, has made this claim in our own time and has proved by powerful heavenly signs that his claim is founded on fact and God is helping his cause wonderfully. It is, therefore, natural that Muslims should claim and believe that now the protection of God is a privilege enjoyed by the Quran alone.

As regards the future, our belief based upon promises made in the Quran is that whenever Muslims forget, or fall away from, the teachings of the Quran, God will, by raising heavenly Reformers, restore to them their faith in its pristine purity. The teachings of the Quran will thus remain effective for all time and will ever continue to enjoy Divine help and protection.

1717. Important Words:

شيع (parties) is the plural of شيعة (a party) which is derived from شاع meaning, it (a thing or a piece of news) became spread or disclosed. اشاع الخبر means, he spread or disclosed the news. شيع بالابل (*shayya'a*) means, he (a pastor) called to the camels whereupon they (gathered together and) followed one another. شيعة of which the plural is شيع means, a separate or distinct party of men, so called from their agreeing together and following one another; the followers or assistants of a man; any people that have combined in or for an affair; any people or party whose affair or case is one and who follow

12. And [a]there never came to them any Messenger but they mocked at him.[1718]

وَمَا يَأْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ⑫

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[a]36:31; 43:8.

one another's opinion (Lane).

Commentary:

In the word شيع (parties or more literally, parties forming groups) all the former peoples have been spoken of as groups. This negatives the assertion of those so-called independent people who describe themselves as not belonging to any group, for every man must belong to one group or another whether old or new, known or unknown. Herding, according to psychologists, is one of the strongest instincts of man, and it is in reference to this fact that the former peoples have been spoken of as forming so many شيع (parties or groups). For the meaning of the word شيع see Important Words.

The verse purports to state that the Prophet of Islam is not the first Prophet. There have been Prophets before him and God extended His protection to their teachings also. Similarly He will protect his teaching, the Quran. On the occasion of the appearance of a Prophet who brings a new Law, this protection is afforded to his teaching, among other things, by his followers being invested with political power which enables them to give a practical demonstration of the truth of his teaching. His followers may not attain to political power very early in their career, nevertheless they achieve such influence as enables them to demonstrate by actual practice the truth of his teachings. It is indeed surprising that the opponents of every Prophet have always refused to test the truth of his claim by the criteria of the history of past Prophets, which is the easiest way to ascertain the merits of any such claim. This attitude of disbelievers proves that they are not honest or earnest about ascertaining the truth but intend only to confuse the issues.

1718. Commentary:

The verse shows that when disbelievers addressed the Holy Prophet saying, *O thou to whom this Exhortation has been sent down, thou art surely a madman* (v. 7), they really used the words in jest. So what it meant in the present verse is that if disbelievers mock at the Holy Prophet, it is not a thing to be wondered at, for even Prophets whom they claim to accept were similarly mocked at by their forefathers.

Another significance of the verse is that whenever there comes a Prophet, God promises to protect his teachings, and this makes disbelievers wonder. They cannot bring themselves to believe that through his teachings he has any chance of success in the face of their opposition and, therefore, they treat him with contempt.

It is surprising that although all

13. [a]Thus do We cause this *habit of mocking* to enter into the hearts of the sinful people;[1719]

كَذٰلِكَ نَسۡلُكُهٗ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِ الۡمُجۡرِمِیۡنَ ﴿ۙ۱۳﴾

14. [b]They believe not therein, though the example of the former *peoples* has gone *before them*.[1720]

لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِهٖ وَقَدۡ خَلَتۡ سُنَّةُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

15. And even if We opened to them a door from heaven, and they began ascending through it,[1721]

وَلَوۡ فَتَحۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمۡ بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَظَلُّوۡا فِیۡهِ یَعۡرُجُوۡنَ ﴿ۙ۱۵﴾

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[a]26:201. [b]26:202.

Prophets have been mocked at on account of their humble origins, yet whenever a new claimant appears he is expected by disbelievers to come with great pomp and splendour. Disbelievers seem to forget that if past Prophets had come with pomp and splendour, they would never have been treated with scorn. Incidentally, the verse draws our attention to the divine law that the fact that every new Messenger of God is, in the beginning, rejected and ridiculed is really a sign of the truth of his claim rather than of his falsehood.

1719. Commentary:

The pronoun "this" in the expression نسلكه (do We cause this to enter) refers to the practice of disbelievers of ridiculing Prophets mentioned in the previous verse. The verse under comment thus signifies that this evil habit of disbelievers springs from their own indulgence in sin and is not imported from outside. It states a general truth, viz. when a man does wrong, his natural aversion for sin is lessened and he gradually develops a liking for it which eventually takes deep root in his heart. It thus follows that the retribution of sin is not the result of some arbitrary action on the part of God but is the natural and inevitable consequence of the sinner's own action.

1720. Commentary:

The evil habit of ridiculing God's Prophets referred to in v. 12 results in the hardening of the heart and debars the mockers from believing in their Prophet in spite of seeing clear signs in his support. The verse means to say that such has been the end of the scoffers of the Prophets in the past and such will be the end of those who mock at the Holy Prophet now.

1721. Commentary:

See note on the succeeding verse.

16. They would surely say, ‘Only our eyes are dazed; rather we are a bewitched people.’1722

لَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ اَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُوْرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ ع

1722. Commentary:

In verse 8 mention was made of the objection of disbelievers that, if the Prophet was not the subject of hallucination, it was impossible to explain that the angels which he said came to him with the Divine Message could not be seen by anyone of them. In answer to this objection it was pointed out, firstly, that angels descended on men according to their natural affinity and that, since disbelievers were the fit objects of punishment, only the angels of punishment could come to them (v. 9); secondly, that when God had afforded protection to the Messages of the previous Prophets, there was no reason why He should not have given His protection to the Message of the present claimant (v. 10); thirdly, that the mockery of disbelievers was nothing to be wondered at, since all disbelievers in their time extended the same treatment to their respective Prophets. In fact, disbelievers indulged in mockery to such an extent that they lost all fear of sin which, became as it were, second nature with them. The opponents of the Holy Prophet would meet with a similar fate (vv. 12, 13).

In the present verse another line of argument has been adopted, for in answer to the objection of disbelievers it is here said that not all men are in a position to understand all things, because understanding requires mental affinity on the part of him who wishes to understand. Disbelievers had become such strangers to spiritual matters that even if they were to undergo some of the spiritual experiences which the Holy Prophet had undergone and were to have some of the visions of the spiritual heights to which he rose, they would not believe and would only end by saying that they were subject to magic or witchcraft. The opening of "a door from heaven," spoken of in the preceding verse, refers to having spiritual experiences and "ascending through heaven" refers to visions of spiritual heights. The words "a door" i.e. not all doors but only one of the doors, are intended to hint that such people could only have passing experience of spiritual matters, which cannot conduce to any real spiritual advancement, the experience being intended only to provide them with proof of the truth of such spiritual matters.

The verse may also be taken to mean that when punishment is about to overtake disbelievers, they get frightened and say that if they were now saved from it, they would believe in the Divine Messenger. In this sense, the clause ولو فتحنا عليهم بابا من السماء (*And even if We opened to them a door from heaven*) occurring in the preceding verse would be taken to mean, "And if We open the door of Divine mercy and avert their

R. 2.

17. And [a]We have, indeed, made mansions *of stars* in the heaven and have adorned it for beholders.[1723]

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّزَيَّنّٰهَا لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾

18. And [b]We have protected it against every rejected satan.[1724]

وَحَفِظْنٰهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ ۙ﴿۱۸﴾

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[a]37:7; 41:13; 67:6. [b]37:8; 41:13.

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punishment"; and the words فظلوا فيه يعرجون (*and they began ascending through it*) would mean "they, instead of turning to God, become engaged in the acquisition of material prosperity and comforts." The verse thus rebukes disbelievers that they have become so hard hearted that when they see punishment overtaking them, they repent; but when it is averted from them, they relapse into their old life of sin and engrossment in worldly pursuits.

1723. Important Words:

بروجا (mansions of stars) is the plural of برج (*burj*) which is from the verb برج (*baraja*) which means, it was or became apparent, manifest or conspicuous; or it was or became high or elevated. ابرج means, he built a tower. برج (*burj*) means a tower; a chamber built upon the sides of a fortress or palace; a sign of the Zodiac. بروج means, mansions (i.e. the courses or stages) of the moon or the stars; or asterisms or constellations (Lane).

Commentary:

The word بروج may be taken here either in the sense of "mansions" of planets and stars i.e. the spaces or courses wherein the planets perform their circuits, or it may signify the stars themselves.

It is not merely the beautiful appearance of the planets and the stars at night that is meant here, because they are not meant to serve only as an ornament for the heavens or to provide a beautiful sight. In reality their creation serves a great purpose which is mentioned in the succeeding verses as well as in 16:17 & 67:6 and it is in the fulfilment of that great purpose that their real beauty lies. See the following verses.

1724. Commentary:

In v. 10 the Quran speaks of the "guarding of the heavenly Exhortation," and in the verse under comment it speaks of the "guarding of the heavens" themselves. So the question arises here, what connection is there between the guarding of the heavenly Exhortation and the guarding of the heavens themselves, and why is it that immediately after speaking of the guarding of the heavenly Exhortation, the Quran speaks of the guarding of the heavens. From a study of the Quran it appears that it claims and repeatedly points to a strong resemblance between the physical and the spiritual systems of the world and, in order to bring home to the reader its various spiritual lessons, the Quran repeatedly draws his attention to the physical system of the world.

The denizens of this earth see over their heads a sky set with stars which do their work regularly in their respective spheres and none has the power to make the least change in this great system of nature, for it has been made secure by God. The Quran repeatedly refers to this system as an illustration of the spiritual heavens above us and it is for this very purpose that the celestial system has been referred to in the verse under comment. It is pointed out that just as the physical system of the heavens has been established on strong foundations, similarly, the spiritual system has been laid on solid foundations, and, like the physical heavens, the spiritual heavens are also divided into various spheres. There can be absolutely no interference in the higher spheres of the spiritual heavens, but in the lowest sphere there may be an attempt at some interference; but it, too, has been fortified with spiritual stars which guard it against any real interference.

Just as the physical heavens are sustained by the physical stars, similarly, the spiritual heavens are sustained by the spiritual stars. Nay, just as the physical heavens mean the sum total of stars which also serve as an adornment for them, similarly, the spiritual heavens are the sum total of the spiritual stars and the latter also serve as an ornament for them. Again, just as the physical stars serve to protect the physical heavens, for they are their component parts, and if they are in any way upset, the whole system will thereby be upset, similarly, the spiritual stars serve to protect the spiritual heavens and if they are disturbed in any way the whole spiritual system will be disturbed. Hence it is that if anyone seeks to disturb the working of the spiritual stars, he is visited with punishment from God i.e. "fire" and "stones" rain upon him, as is clear from the word رجوما (stoning) in 67:6 and the word شهاب (flame) in the following verse.

The spiritual system has been compared to the physical system in other verses of the Quran also. In 33:47, for instance, the Holy Prophet has been likened to the sun, thus indicating that as the sun is the central figure in the physical system, so is the Holy Prophet the central figure in the spiritual realm; he is like the sun in the firmament of Prophets who are like so many stars and moons as compared with him. On a smaller scale, the Holy Prophet is also like the sun among his Companions, whom he likened to stars. He is reported to have said: "My Companions are like so many stars; whichever of them you follow, you will be rightly guided" (Ṣaghīr).

The analogy between the two systems, physical and spiritual, is brought out clearly in chapter 12, where Joseph is spoken of as having seen in a vision eleven stars along with the sun and the moon making obeisance to him (12:5). The interpretation of this vision by Joseph himself showed that the sun and the moon in his vision represented his parents and the eleven stars his eleven brethren.

In the verse under comment, the Quran refers to the solar system in order to illustrate how the protection of the Quran promised in verse 10 is to be effected. We are here told that just as in the material universe there is a sky (which is another name for the whole body of stars), similarly, in the spiritual universe there are various Prophets who form the spiritual heaven. Again, as each star serves as an ornament for the physical heaven and is guarding it by means of gravitation and other means, which are perhaps yet unknown to man, similarly, every Prophet is an ornament for the spiritual heaven and helps to guard it. Each Prophet appeared when his presence was really needed and every one of them had a definite task to perform which he alone could do. Similarly, every Prophet helped to guard the spiritual heaven, and served the Word of God, demonstrating its true nature as well as its holy influence in his own person and in the persons of his followers. Moreover, each Prophet fought and routed those wicked people who sought to distort the Word of God, and, as it were, fell upon them like fire and stones and frustrated their designs.

The verse also points out that just as in the physical world satans, i.e. evil persons, exercise some sort of power or influence, and can cause a certain amount of injury to man but possess no power in the heavens, being unable to deprive men of heavenly blessings such as light and air and the wholesome influence of the stars, etc., similarly, in the spiritual world, satans have no control over the Prophets and their true followers (v. 43). Again, just as satans have no power over the blessings which come from the physical heavens, similarly the blessings that are manifested through the spiritual heavens (i.e. Prophets), such as Divine revelation and heavenly signs, are beyond the control of satans. This is how the verse under comment explains verse 10.

The word رجیم (rejected) signifies that such persons will be driven away from the truth and will not be able to accept Islam. Surely, those disbelievers who seek to attain salvation independently of the Prophets of God and do not follow the way which has been prescribed by Him are kept away from the truth and never accept it.

Finally, it must be noted that by the word "satan" in this verse is not meant the forces of evil which serve as a trial for men. Here the word stands for any person who wishes to make spiritual progress independently of the ways revealed by God. As Satan wished to act independently of Adam and refused to obey him, so any person who seeks to attain salvation without following the Prophets of God is called a satan on account of his likeness to *Iblīs*. The preceding verses speak of disbelievers (vv. 14-16); so the word "satan" in the verse under comment refers to such

19. But [a]if any one hears stealthily, there pursues him a bright flame.1725

اِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاَتْبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝١٩

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[a]37:11; 67:6.

disbelievers as refuse to obey the Prophets and desire to attain union with God independently of them. Against such the spiritual heavens have indeed been guarded, and the doors of God's nearness are closed against them.

1725. Important Words:

استرق السمع (hears stealthily). استرق is derived from سرق. The expression سرق منه or سرقه means, he stole from him a thing; he took a thing from him secretly and by artifice; or he came clandestinely to a place of custody and took what belonged to another. استرق منه or استرقه means, he stole from him a thing or robbed him of it. استرق also means, he deceived or circumvented secretly or by stealth. The expression استراق النظر means, taking an opportunity of looking by stealth. السمع means, the sense of hearing; the thing that is heard; the faculty in the ear whereby it perceives sounds; the ear itself. The word is used in both the singular and plural. استرق السمع or سرق السمع means, he listened or heard by stealth (Lane).

مبين (bright). See 2:169.

شهاب (flame) is derived from شهب which means, it was or became of the colour in which whiteness predominated over blackness; or in which whiteness was interrupted by blackness. شهاب of which the plural is شهب (*shuhub*) means, a brand or a flame of fire; or a مشعلة of fire gleaming or radiating; a shooting or falling star; a star or the like of a star that darts across the sky; a shining star; one who is penetrating, sharp or energetic in an affair (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that so long as the Word of God is in the heavens and till it descends on the Prophets, it is secure and safe against all interference and stealing, but when, after descending on the lowest heaven it is recited to human beings and when men begin to repeat it to one another, then satans i.e. the enemies of God's Prophets, try to steal it and make a wrong use of it. Then either as a result of this stealing they are visited by heavenly punishment or the Prophet of the day and his followers explain the true nature of the Divine revelation to the people and expose the deception of the stealers, who then become disgraced and humiliated. Thus the stealing of the Word of God in this verse means that, like thieves who take unlawful possession of the property of other people, the enemies of God's Prophets seek to steal the Word of God not in order to believe in it but to mislead people by misrepresenting and misinterpreting it.

Stealing the Word of God may also refer to the action of such people as seek to represent the teachings of the Prophets as their own. In this way they seek to deceive other people into believing that the Prophets have brought no new thing and that they too have access to that knowledge which the Prophets of God claim to possess. Some of them even go so far as to pretend that it is from them that the Prophets stole their knowledge. But, just as a stolen dress does not fit the body of the thief, similarly the teachings which are stolen from the Prophets do not fit in with the false beliefs of those who steal them and consequently their theft becomes easily exposed.

The words, *But if anyone hears stealthily*, make it clear that in verse 17 the words, "the heaven" represent the spiritual system, and not the physical firmament, for the stealing away of the Word of God has nothing to do with the physical heavens. The word مبین (bright) which means both a thing that is bright in itself and a thing that illuminates others (2:169) and which has been added to the word شهاب (flame) in the present verse also, shows that the verse speaks of no physical or material flame. The physical شهاب (flame) either means a flame of fire or the light which appears in the sky and looks like a shooting star. It is superfluous to qualify a thing which itself is bright by the epithet مبین (bright). But if the heavens be taken to mean the spiritual heavens and شهاب (flame) be taken as meaning a Prophet of God who brings with him the illuminating light of heavenly signs and fights the evil machinations of those who seek to tamper with the Word of God, then the word مبین (bright) can be used as quite an appropriate adjective to the noun شهاب (flame), for in this case this word would express an additional idea by referring to the bright signs shown by the Prophets.

Stars in these verses represent God's Prophets, while شهاب مبین (bright flame) or شهاب ثاقب (penetrating flame) occurring in 37:11 represent the Prophet of the day, for although every Prophet is a star and serves as an ornament for the spiritual heaven, yet every Prophet is not always acting as شهاب (flame) destroying the satans who tamper with religion. This is done only by the Prophet of the day or by a living Prophet whose prophethood knows no end and whose Law is always in force. When the people of the time of such a Prophet become corrupt and God raises from among his followers a Reformer or subordinate Prophet, in that case also the Master-Prophet is called a شهاب (flame), because it is his spiritual power and influence which works through the subordinate Prophet. According to this significance of the word, Moses, Jesus, and other past Prophets may indeed be called the stars of the spiritual heavens, but they cannot be called شهب (flames), for they have now ceased to be the means for the destruction of satans. But the epithet of شهاب (flame) will always apply to the Holy Prophet, for his mission will continue till the end of days and Divine Reformers will continue to be raised from among his followers who, by receiving spiritual power and influence from him, will continue to destroy the satans of their day.

Of the different meanings of شهاب (see Important Words), it is in the sense of star that the word is used in the verse under comment. This interpretation is supported by vv. 37:7-8 & 67:6, in which it is stated that the protection of the heavens is secured by means of stars which are used as a means of stoning satans. So the pursuing of satans by شهب means that so long as a Divine revelation continues to be a living revelation and deserves to be called الذكر (v. 10), God also continues to send شهب or, in other words, heavenly Messengers for its protection. In the verse under comment it has been promised that this method of protecting Divine revelation applies particularly to the Quran. In fact, it constitutes the most effective method of protection, for the heavenly Messengers not only defend the Divine Law from the attacks of satans by the help of heavenly signs but, being favoured by Divine revelation, they are also in a position to give believers a true interpretation of the Word of God, which leaves no room for doubt. Believers thus get rid of those contradictory interpretations which had been puzzling the minds of the people before the coming of the heavenly Messenger.

But what is the significance of the shooting stars that dart across the physical heavens and do they also in any way strike a blow at the satans? This is a pertinent question and the answer is that they too serve a purpose. As a matter of fact it is an invariable divine law that at the advent of every new Prophet God shows two kinds of Signs: (a) those that are manifested in the world round about us; (b) those that take place in the celestial bodies. One of the signs of the latter class is the falling of stars. History testifies to the fact that in the time of Jesus and the Holy Prophet the phenomenon of the falling of stars was frequently witnessed. In the time of the Holy Prophet meteors fell in such large numbers that disbelievers thought that both heaven and earth were going to fall asunder (Kathīr, under 72:9). This sign was witnessed in fulfilment of the prophecy of the previous Scriptures, for some changes in the heavens were predicted by the Israelite Prophets as a sign of the appearance of the Holy Prophet. It was from these extraordinary happenings that Heraclius who, it appears, had some knowledge of astronomy inferred that the Prophet-King of the Arabs must have appeared (Bukhārī, ch. on *Bad'ul-Waḥy*).

From the traditions it appears that in the time of Jesus also meteors fell in unusually large numbers (Biḥār). With regard to the second advent of the Messiah the Gospels say: And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars (Luke 21:25; Matt. 24:29). And this actually happened in 1885 in the time of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah. Thus both history and traditions bear testimony to the fact that the falling of meteors in unusual numbers has been fixed by God as a sign of the advent of a Prophet. One reason why this phenomenon has been fixed as a sign is that it is beyond a Prophet's power to cause such a phenomenon and its occurrence therefore leaves no doubt that it has been brought about solely by God. There may also be other unknown reasons for the occurrence of such a phenomenon on the advent of a Prophet. For instance, there may be some hidden influences accompanying the phenomenon which, unknown to man, may be helpful in counteracting the wicked designs of the opponents of the Prophets.

There is also a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that sometimes satans succeed in carrying their words to the people before they are overtaken by the shooting stars, and sometimes the latter overtake them before they carry their message to the people. This ḥadīth means that whereas some enemies of the Prophets are overtaken by the sudden and immediate wrath of God, others are granted some respite until the cup of their iniquities is full and then they too are consumed by Divine punishment.

In short, these verses speak of the protection of the Word of God. The Quran says that none can know the Word of God until it is revealed to a Prophet. But when it has actually been revealed, the devils among men (i.e. common folk) and jinn (i.e. high-placed men or those who work clandestinely) try to get access to it by various means and propagate it among men by mixing much falsehood with it, and thus strive to incite the people against the Prophet. They seek to do it by quoting a passage from the teaching of the Prophet and then putting upon it a wrong interpretation. Or they tear a passage from its context and try to mislead the people by quoting it to them. This has been the invariable practice of the enemies of the Prophets of God in all ages.

It is only such "stealing" by the satans which God in His infinite wisdom has deemed fit to permit and against which He has not protected the mission of a Prophet. In fact, God Himself sometimes affords such opportunities to the opponents of the Prophets (6:113). In short, while on the one hand God has so protected His word that no enemy, external or internal, can make any change in it; on the other He, in His infallible wisdom, has permitted satanic people to disseminate wrong interpretations of His word among men and incite them by uttering lies about the revelation vouchsafed to His Prophets. When, however, they have finished doing so, a flame from the heavens pursues and strikes them, with the result that their deception is exposed by the Prophet. This peculiar treatment of the enemies of the Prophets by God casts no reflection on His power, nor does it do any real harm to His religion. The false notions spread among the enemies of the Prophet afford them only a temporary joy of which they soon become deprived.

It also appears from the Quran that satans who carry on wicked campaigns against the Word of God, are of two classes: (a) internal enemies or hypocrites; (b) external enemies or disbelievers. Proof of this division is to be found in the fact that in verse 18 and in 67:6 opposition to the Prophet has been ascribed to شیطان رجیم (Satan, the rejected), while in 37:8 it has been ascribed to شیطان مارد (Satan, the rebellious). Now the word رجیم literally means, "driven away" while مارد means, "rebellious"; hence in the present *Sūrah* as well as in *Sūrah* 67 the enemies of the truth spoken of are disbelievers who are described by the words شیطان رجیم (Satan, the rejected) for they always keep away from Islam, it being thus hinted that God will protect His word from the attacks of disbelievers; while in *Sūrah* 37 we are told that some men, though professing to be Muslims, will try to distort the sense of the Quran intentionally or unintentionally. Such people are called شیطان مارد (Satan, the rebellious). They outwardly pass as Muslims but in their heart of hearts they are rebels against Islam, though they themselves may not be conscious of the fact. God has held out the promise that He will protect His word even from the mischief of this latter class. This was really a prophecy about the future, and it was declared that whenever the so-called followers of Islam became incapable of understanding the true significance of the Quran and began to distort its true meaning, God would protect His word from such mischief by raising a Messenger who would interpret it rightly.

A word about astrologers and so-called spiritualists will not be out of place here. The Prophets of God succeed in extirpating the false notions and make-beliefs of these people as well. The science of the stars and the idea that they influence the actions of man so far as they deal with realities are not opposed to the teachings of Islam. The Quran, on the contrary, repeatedly exhorts its followers to study the laws of nature. It is therefore inconceivable that on the one hand God should have exhorted Muslims to study nature, which includes the study of heavenly bodies, and on the other hand should Himself have sent شهب (flames) upon those who desire to gain a knowledge of the heavenly bodies. Islam is only opposed to superstition and idolatry, and not to true knowledge and rightly-conducted research. Hence so far as these sciences tend to cause and create superstition or mere supposition, they are condemned by Islam. Similarly, these sciences are denounced when they are given the status of, and are treated as religion because then they lead to idolatry (*shirk*). The physical movements of stars certainly exercise influence upon man, but their influencing the actions of men falls within the purview of the laws of nature. There are thousands of things which are exercising similar influences at one and the same time, but no result can be definitely ascribed to one influence only. It is God alone Who exercises His influence independently of all others. So to think that anything happens in the world as a result of the influence of any single material object, whether a star or anything else, is virtually an act of *shirk*, which Islam condemns in the strongest terms. This is why the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Whoever says, 'We have been favoured with rain through the influence of such and such a star,' is a disbeliever in God and a believer in that star" (Bukhārī, *Kitābul-Istisqā*).

If the word "satans" be taken to refer to astrologers, then the pelting of the satans will mean that during the time when there is no Prophet in the world, astrologers succeed to a certain extent in their trade in hoodwinking simple-minded people but, with the appearance of a Prophet, their falsehood becomes exposed and people can easily distinguish between true prophecies made by heavenly Messengers and the mere conjectures of astrologers.

Some commentators have explained these verses as meaning that satans or jinn ascend to heaven and try to listen to what is decided there and then communicate what they hear to their friends—soothsayers and diviners—mixing with it much falsehood. They further say that God has appointed sentinels to guard His decrees and when it comes to the knowledge of these sentinels that satans are listening to what is being decreed in heaven, they hurl shooting stars at them. This interpretation, however, is open to many objections. Firstly, it is inconsistent with the previous verse wherein we are told that the heavens are guarded by God against satans. It is inconceivable that satans should succeed in violating the guardianship of God and should be able to hear anything that God does not want them to hear. Secondly, if it be supposed that satans are able to steal something out of that which has been guarded by God, they may also be regarded as being able to steal something out of the revelation which is sent down to the Prophets of God, and thus the very sanctity and inviolability of the Word of God will become subject to serious doubts. Thirdly, if it be supposed that satans can have access even to such things as are under the special protection of God, then they can also succeed in tempting the Prophets of God whom He has promised to protect (v. 18). Moreover in v. 43 we are clearly told that Satan has no power over the righteous servants of God. Fourthly, if it be conceded that satans can steal things which are under the protection of God, then even the prophethood of heavenly Messengers will become doubtful, for if satans can manage to steal a little, they can also steal a considerable portion; nay, in that case they can steal even the prophethood of a Prophet. Fifthly, we know that astrologers and diviners are always trying to predict future events. If it is satans who convey and communicate to them secret things, and if they are pelted with shooting stars whenever they try to steal heavenly secrets, then whenever astrologers seek to predict the future and satans try to pry into the secrets of heaven, there should always appear in the heavens a shooting star to drive away a Satan. But such is not the case. Sixthly, the Quran says: *Say, none in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen save Allah* (27:66). How then is it possible that Satan should be able to know the unseen? The unseen is known only to

20. And [a]the earth have We spread out, and [b]set therein firm mountains and caused everything to grow therein in proper proportion.1726

وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ ۝٢٠

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[a]13:4. [b]16:16; 21:32.

God and His Chosen Ones. In 72:27, 28 we read: *He is the Knower of the unseen; and He reveals not His secrets, to anyone, except him whom He chooses, namely, a Messenger of His. And then He causes an escort of guardian angels to go before him and behind him.* This shows that the secrets of the unknown are revealed only to chosen Messengers of God. If these hidden secrets can be stolen by satans on the way, they cannot be said to reach the heavenly Messengers intact. Seventhly, satans cannot steal anything from the decrees of God because, according to the Quran, it is mere falsehood that they communicate to their friends. In 6:113, we read: *And in like manner have We made for every Prophet an enemy, evil ones from among men and* jinn. *They suggest one to another gilded speech in order to deceive.* The expression "gilded speech" according to Arabic idiom means, "lies." Eighthly, the Quran says: *The satans have not brought it down, nor is it meet for them, nor are they able to do so, for they are debarred from hearing* (26:211-213).

From the above it is clear that the secrets of the heavens are God's guarded treasure to which satans have no access and which are made known only to God's chosen ones.

1726. Important Words:

مددناها (have We spread out) is derived from مد. They say مدالشیء i.e. he spread out the thing. مدالارض means, he added extraneous soil or fertilizer to the earth in order to enrich it. مدالرجل means, he helped the man (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, والارض مددناها mean, "We have spread out the earth" or, "We have enriched it." Both meanings are applicable here. The verse signifies that God has made the earth so large that in spite of its being round, man feels no discomfort on account of its roundness; or it means that God has enriched the earth with fertilizers. It is a well-known fact that the earth continues to acquire new strength and fertility from the stars. Astronomical researches have disclosed the important fact that particles of matter have ever continued to fall on the earth from the stars in the form of meteors or meteoric dust which serves to increase the fertility of the earth. Next to such food the earth needs a good supply of water. For this purpose God has created mountains, which serve as reservoirs of water, storing it in the form of snow and distributing it over the earth by means of rivers.

Similarly, both the meanings of the

21. And [a]We have made for you therein means of livelihood, and *also* for *all* those for whom you do not provide.[1727]

وَجَعَلۡنَا لَكُمۡ فِيۡهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنۡ لَّسۡتُمۡ لَهٗ بِرٰزِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾

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[a] 7:11.

word انبت viz. "to grow" and "to increase" apply here. God has made all things required for the needs of man to grow in the earth and to increase. The verse means that all the requirements of man have been determined by God in a proper proportion and as the process of consumption is also going on, the things needed by man have been suitably made to grow and increase in the earth.

The relation of this verse to the preceding one is that in the latter mention was made of the revelation of the Quran and of the special provision made for its protection and this was illustrated by comparison with certain celestial phenomena. In the present verse, however, another illustration of such protection has been furnished by a terrestrial phenomenon. The verse states that God has made special arrangements for fertilizing the earth and for replenishing and making good its losses. Some of these arrangements are external and some internal e.g. (1) matter falling to the earth from the stellar spaces; (2) the mountains; (3) the inherent powers of the earth. The same is the case with Divine Scriptures. The external arrangement made for their protection is the help which they get from heaven in the form of divine teachers who appear in the fullness of time to safeguard the spirit of these Scriptures; and the internal arrangements are their intrinsic beauties and excellences which attract the hearts of all good men.

1727. Commentary:

The verse points out that though man claims superiority over other animals, yet he can make no provision for their sustenance. That provision is made by God alone and constitutes a great proof of His existence.

In the figurative sense the relation of this verse to the previous ones is that like physical sustenance, man is also in need of spiritual sustenance in every age. The people of one generation cannot provide spiritual sustenance for another generation. This is because not only human knowledge and learning but also man's conditions and circumstances vary from age to age. This change in the conditions and circumstances of man requires a most comprehensive Divine revelation containing teaching for his material, moral and spiritual development in all ages. For, if it were left to man himself to provide for the needs and requirements of future generations, he could never do it. The knowledge of the present generation cannot meet and satisfy the problems and needs of future generations. Ordinarily, even the

22. And [a]there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures thereof and We send it not down except in a known measure.1728

وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ وَمَا
نُنَزِّلُهٗٓ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

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[a] 40:14.

Word of God revealed in one generation becomes ineffectual in another generation. But this is not so with the Quran, which is meant to be the universal and the final Law. In the Quran, therefore, God has made full provision for all the needs and requirements of man. Just as God has made provision for the sustenance of animals, for which man cannot make any provision, even so has He placed in the Quran for all future generations of man an inexhaustible store of spiritual food, which they will find in ample measure as and when the need for it arises.

The Quran, in fact, resembles the material universe in the inexhaustibility of its resources. Just as the physical needs of man have been fully met in the past and will continue to be met in future by the material resources of the earth, similarly, his moral and spiritual needs have been met in the past and will continue to be met by the Quran, which constitutes the spiritual universe. See also the succeeding verse.

1728. Commentary:

This verse further explains the meaning of the previous verse. It purports to say that God possesses an unlimited stock of everything. But in His infinite mercy He directs the minds of men to a certain thing only when a real and genuine need for it arises. Then it happens that men begin to find access to the required thing and derive benefit from it. For example, there was a time when men did not know the various uses and properties of iron. When, however, the proper time arrived for all its manifold potentialities and uses to be known, they were discovered and these discoveries led to a great change in human affairs. Similar is the case of coal and of petroleum. These things opened up a great vista of progress for mankind. Again, discovery of electricity and the wonderful inventions that have come in its wake have revolutionized human life. Thus the universe has been unfolding its secrets from age to age. The verse under comment purports to say that, like the material universe, the Quran is a spiritual universe in which lie hidden treasures of spiritual knowledge which are revealed to man according to the needs of the time. It is not like other books that it should have served its purpose and then become a dead thing. On the contrary, like the physical universe, the Quran comprehends unlimited treasures of spiritual knowledge for all times. It is, therefore, impossible that it should be left without Divine protection until all the generations for whom its treasures are meant have received them. Other revealed Scriptures never laid any claim about the

23. And [a]We send impregnating winds, then We send down water from the clouds, then We give it to you to drink; and you are not the ones to store it up.1729

وَاَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيٰحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوْهُ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ ۝٢٣

[a]7:58; 24:44; 25:49.

inexhaustibility of their treasures and therefore they did not enjoy eternal Divine protection.

The subject matter of the previous verse has been further developed in the verse under comment, viz. the protection and preservation of the Quran, but, in a different form. The present verse is intended to point to the provision for the removal of such doubts and misgivings as were to arise in future in the hearts of the people, including Muslims themselves.

1729. Important Words:

لواقح (impregnating) is the plural of لاقح which is the active-participle from لقح. They say لقحت الناقة i.e. the she camel became pregnant; or she received into her womb the seed of the stallion. لقحت النخيل means, the palm-trees became fecundated by means of the لقاح or spadix of the male tree which is bruised or brayed and sprinkled upon the spadix of the female. لاقح means, a she-camel having just conceived, or become pregnant. رياح لواقح means, pregnant winds; impregnating or fecundating winds; winds which collect vapours and then form into clouds and send down rain. حرب لواقح means, a war pregnant with great events. لاقح also means, a man to whom offspring is born (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary

The word لواقح as explained under Important Words signifies such winds as carry pollen from the male to the female trees in order to fecundate them. It also means the winds which carry vapours rising from the earth to the upper air where they assume the form of clouds. In the present verse the word may be taken in the latter sense or in both senses. The verse would thus mean that it is God Who sends winds which carry the pollen from male to female trees as well as the winds which raise vapours from the earth which become transformed into clouds that send down rain, fertilizing the fecundated plants and making them bear fruit in abundance. The verse proceeds to point out that when with such a common necessity as water it is not in the power of man to preserve it in its purity, it cannot be possible for him to preserve the spiritual blessings of God in their original purity without His help and protection.

The verse is addressed to both believers and disbelievers. To the latter it answers the question of what was the need for the Quran to be revealed in the presence of previous Scriptures? They are told that just as in the presence of oceans of water on the earth there is still need for fresh water from heaven, even so the Quran

24. And verily, [a]it is We Who give life, and We Who cause death; and [b]it is We Who are the *sole* Inheritor.[1730]	وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ٢٤
25. And We do know those who go ahead among you and We do know those who lag behind.[1731]	وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ ٢٥
26. And surely, [c]it is thy Lord Who will gather them together. Surely, He is Wise, All-Knowing.[1732]	وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ٢٦ ع ٢ ١٠ ٢

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[a]50:44. [b]19:41. [c]6:129; 25:18; 34:41.

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was needed in the presence of the previous Scriptures. To believers it says that just as even heavenly water becomes impure and has to be renewed afresh from time to time, similarly, whenever the so-called believers would pollute the pure sense of the Quran by the interpolation of their own impure thoughts and false notions into its teachings, God would arrange to have its true meaning restored to its pristine purity by fresh revelation from heaven.

1730. Commentary:

The verse means to say that when the Word of God is revealed, those who follow the guidance contained therein are given spiritual life, while those who reject it become spiritually dead.

The words, *it is We Who are the sole Inheritor*, mean that when all creatures have perished, God alone will live. So these perishable creatures cannot be the custodians of His word. Since they themselves are perishable, God cannot entrust to them the custody of His word.

1731. Commentary:

This verse answers the question why the preservation and protection of the Quran cannot be entrusted to believers. The answer is that faith is a matter which pertains to the heart, and the condition of the human heart is known to God alone. The preservation of the Quran does not depend only upon intellectual equipment but upon the purity of the heart also. But it is known to God alone which man is pure of heart, and which is not. God has, therefore, reserved the work of preservation of the Quran for Himself so that He may entrust it to one whom He knows to be so spiritually advanced as to be fit for the duty.

1732. Commentary:

The word حشر (gathering together) used in this verse signifies the post-mortal Resurrection when all

R. 3.

27. And, surely, [a]We created man from dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape.[1733]

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

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[a] 6:3; 15:29, 34; 55:15.

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generations of men will be assembled together. It is also used to signify the bringing together of men by a Prophet of God. A Prophet rescues the people to whom he is sent from the differences which separate them and links them all in one bond of common brotherhood. The verse under comment refers to both the former and the latter assemblages. It thus consoles the Holy Prophet and his few early Companions with the assurance that, although his countrymen were now bitterly opposed to him, a time would come when they would all gather under his banner.

The words, *He is Wise*, are intended to hint that the assembling together of the Arabs under the banner of Islam would be brought about not immediately and all at once but slowly and gradually. Immediate and speedy conversion could only be effected by God's direct intervention amounting to compulsion, but that would deprive men of the merit of such conversion. Moreover, in the event of such Divine intervention it would become impossible to distinguish between people of different spiritual capacities as evinced by the difference in their attitudes towards the heavenly Messenger. If all men had been made to accept Islam by the direct intervention of God, all would have become Muslims on the first day of the announcement by the Holy Prophet of his claim, and all distinction between men of different spiritual capacities and aptitudes, such as between Abū Bakr and Abū Jahl or even between Abū Bakr and later converts, would have altogether disappeared.

The word, *All-Knowing*, suggests that even if the final triumph of the truth is delayed through Divine dispensation, there is no occasion for the Faithful to lose hope; for God, to Whom all secrets of the future are known, assures them that all Arabia would soon be gathered under the banner of Islam.

Taking the word حشر (gathering together) in the sense of post-mortal Resurrection, the verse would signify that on the Day of Judgement all generations of men, past and future, would be assembled before God and would be rewarded according to their deeds. Muslims, therefore, should not mind if in the early days of the struggle they are meeting with hardships and difficulties, and should not look upon those who have died before the final triumph of Islam as having died in vain, because the real Day of Reckoning is to come after death.

1733. Important Words:

صلصال (dry ringing clay) is derived

from صل or صلصل which both mean, it sounded; or it produced or emitted a sound; or it made a clashing, ringing or tinkling sound; or it made a long or repeated sound. صلصل الجرس means, the bell made a prolonged ringing or tinkling sound. صلصل فلانا means, he frightened, threatened or terrified such a one. تصلصل means, it (dry clay) made a crackling sound when trodden upon. تصلصل الغدير means, the black mud of the pool became dry, because such dry mud makes a crackling sound when trodden upon. صلصال means a noisy ass; an ass or a horse sharp and shrill in voice; clay not made into pottery so-called because of its making a sound; or clay mixed with sand which, when it becomes dry makes a sound and which when baked is فخار; or dry clay that makes a sound by reason of its dryness (Lane & Aqrab).

حمأ (black mud) is the noun from حمأ (*ḥama'a*). They say حمئت البئر i.e. the well had in it black (fetid) mud in abundance. حمأالبئر means, he cleansed the well of its black (fetid) mud. حمأ الماء means, the water was or became mixed with black fetid mud, and so was rendered turbid and altered in odour. احمأ البئر means, he threw black fetid mud into the well. حمئ عليه means, he was angry with him. حمأ means, black mud; or black fetid mud (Lane & Aqrab).

مسنون (wrought into shape) is the passive participle from سن. They say سنه i.e. he bit him with his اسنان or teeth; or he formed or fashioned or shaped it; or he sharpened or whetted it. سننت لكم سنة means, I have instituted for you a custom or practice to be followed. They say سن الله سنة i.e. God manifested or made known for the people a right way of acting; سن الطين means, he plastered pottery with the clay; or he made the clay into pottery. سن (in the passive voice) means, it became altered for the worse or stinking. مسنون means, bitten with the teeth; sharpened or whetted or polished; made smooth; formed, fashioned or shaped; poured forth into moulds to become hardened and formed into a certain shape; or (mud) altered, for the worse in odour; made long and beautiful (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The creation of Adam has been mentioned at several places in the Quran and it is worthy of special note that wherever the Quran speaks of the creation of Adam, it prefaces the account with a reference to Resurrection, as may be seen from the following passages:

Reference to the creation of Adam.	*Reference to Resurrection.*
2:31.	2:29.
7:12.	7:9-10.
18:51.	18:48-50.
20:117.	20:102-105.
38:72.	38:50-65.

A careful study of these passages leads one to the conclusion that this juxtaposition is not accidental. The Quran does not refer to Resurrection or facts relating to it when it speaks of other Prophets such as Moses or Abraham; but whenever it speaks of the creation of Adam, it invariably precedes this account with a reference to Resurrection. Evidently, there must be some deep connection between the two events which accounts for their simultaneous mention. The same is true of several other subjects mentioned in the Quran; thus indicating that they have been put together with a definite purpose. For instance, we find that whenever the Quran speaks of the universal spread of Islam, it couples this subject with a reference to the account of Jesus, thus indicating that it was through the Promised Messiah who was to appear in the latter days as the counterpart of Jesus that the complete propagation and the universal spread of Islam was to be brought about. See also vv. 9:30-33, 48:29, 30 & 61:7-10.

As for the reason why reference to the creation of Adam is always preceded by a reference to post-mortal Resurrection, it may be noted (1) that the creation of Adam or man being subject to the Law or Shari'ah demands that there should be a general Resurrection and final Judgement for adjudging the goodness or badness of human actions and for awarding rewards and punishments; while, on the other hand, Resurrection and Judgement of mankind demands that there should be a Law or Sharī'ah, because without such a Law the awarding of rewards and punishments becomes meaningless; (2) that the creation of man constitutes a strong proof of Resurrection.

The following arguments may be given in support of this contention:

(a) Man is the crown and acme of all creation. His creation became complete after a long process of gradual development and evolution. This proves that there is indeed a Day of Reckoning, because if man had been given his present form at the very outset, it could legitimately be said that his creation in his present form was an accident and that, like other things which took their respective shapes as the result of natural changes, he too, received his present form. But the creation of man in his present perfect form, after a long process of gradual change and evolution, and then the stopping of its further development after his having attained his present form, shows that man's creation was not an accident but the result of a predetermined plan and that he was meant to be the crown and object of the whole creation.

(b) The fact that there exist in nature two powers—one of good and the other of evil and that man possesses the power to do both good or bad deeds, and that these powers are subject to his volition and control, proves that he has been created to rule and dominate creation. The reward and recompense of his works should, therefore, be something more than the direct result of his actions. This presupposes post-mortal existence and a time of reckoning i.e. Resurrection and Judgement.

(c) All material progress of man depends upon the observance and obedience of the laws of nature and not upon moral and spiritual laws. In man's life, however, moral and spiritual considerations play a much more important part. It, therefore, follows that material progress is not the end of human life and that there must be some other life where he should receive the full reward of his moral and spiritual endeavours.

Man having been created from صلصال (dry ringing clay) signifies that he has been created from matter in which the faculty and attribute of speech lay latent. This shows that he has been endowed with the power to respond to the voice of God. But as صلصال (dry ringing clay) emits a sound only when struck with something extraneous, the word is intended to hint that man's power to respond is subject to his receiving the Divine Call. This faculty establishes his superiority over the whole creation.

The Quranic words that man has been created from حمأ مسنون (black mud wrought into shape) have been used to draw attention to the fact that man has been created from حمأ (black mud) i.e. earth and water; earth being the source of the body and water of the soul. Elsewhere, the Quran speaks of "earth" and "water" separately as the things of which man has been created (3:60, 21:31). By joining the word صلصال (dry ringing clay) with the word حمأ (black mud), the Quran means to point out that while other living things are created of حمأ (black mud) only, viz. of earth and water, for they too possess a certain kind of undeveloped soul, man is created of حمأ combined with صلصال i.e. the attribute of speech. He is also مسنون i.e. wrought into perfect shape. See also 95:5.

It should be remembered that the verse does not mean that clay became at once moulded into a living man by God having breathed life into it. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the fact that the creation of the universe was gradual. The verse speaks here of only the first stage of man's creation. Other stages of creation have been mentioned in other verses of the Quran e.g. 30:21, 35:12, 40:68, 22:6 and 23:15. These should be read in the order in which they are given here in order to understand how the different stages of development and evolution of man, omitted in one verse, are supplied in the others.

The statement of the Quran that man was created out of "earth" (which, incidentally, means that the long process of his creation started with it) also finds corroboration from the fact that even now man's food is derived from the earth, certain parts being derived directly and others indirectly. This clearly shows that the matter contained in the earth forms the origin of man; for if such had not been the case, he could not have derived his nutrition from it, because only that thing of which a being is made can supply it with nutrition, a foreign element being unable to replenish wastage.

The verse also implies an effective answer to those who disbelieve and wonder at the possibility of God's speaking to human beings. The verse points out that it is not the phenomenon of revelation that is to be wondered at. On the contrary, it would be a matter for wonder if there had been no such phenomenon, because even from the very beginning of his creation man had been endowed with the power and capacity to receive Divine revelation and respond to it.

28. And [a]the Jinn We had created before from the fire of hot wind.1734

وَالْجَآنَّ خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَّارِ السَّمُوْمِ ⑳٨

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[a]7:13; 38:77; 55:16.

1734. Important Words:

الجان (the jinn) is derived from جن (*janna*). They say جنه i.e. it veiled, concealed or covered him. جان or الجان generally considered synonymous with جن (jinn) means, the father of the جن or جان is the quasi-plural noun of جن. The word جان also means, that which conceals or darkens; or that which becomes or remains concealed or hidden. It also means, a white serpent or a small white serpent, a species which is harmless and abounds in houses (Aqrab & Lane). See also 6:101, 129.

سموم (hot wind) is derived from سم . They say سمه i.e. he poisoned it or infected it with poison; or he perforated it; or he pierced or passed through it; he examined it and endeavoured to learn its depth. سمت الريح means, the hot wind scorched the things. سموم means, a hot wind; a hot wind which pierces the body; the flaming fire which has no smoke (Lane, Aqrab & Muḥīṭ).

Commentary:

Etymologically whatever hides or covers or darkens a thing, or whatever is concealed or invisible or becomes invisible is جن (jinn). According to the popular idea, however, the jinn are such beings as are invisible to us and are capable of being seen only when they disclose themselves to us. The belief in the existence of such spirits is widespread and has been found in all ages. Some include all invisible spirits in the category of angels and look upon the jinn as fallen angels.

The word jinn (see 6:101, 113; 7:13, 39, 180; 17:89; 18:51; 27:18, 40; 34:13, 42; 37:1.59; 41:26, 30; 46:19, 30; 51:57; 55:16, 40, 57, 75; 72:2, 6, 7; 114:7) has been used in different senses in the Quran as well as in the Traditions, all based upon the two basic meanings of the word, viz. (a) that which remains hidden or concealed; and (b) that which hides or conceals or covers. The word جن has been applied by the Quran to the following:

(1) Evil spirits which inspire evil thoughts in the minds of men. They are the agents of Satan and are, as it were, his incarnates (114:6, 7).

(2) Some imaginary beings whom the infidels worshipped but who existed nowhere in the world (34:42).

(3) The inhabitants of northern hilly tracts of Europe of white and red colour whom other peoples, such as Hindus and Jews, looked upon as beings separate from other human beings and who lived detached from the civilized people of Asia but who were destined to make great material progress in the latter days and to lead a great revolt against religion (55:16, 40, 57).

(4) Peoples belonging to alien

religions and nationalities (34:13 & 2 Chron. 2:7-18).

(5) Savages and wild peoples who in pre-historic times, before man had morally developed enough to be given a revealed code of laws, lived in caves and hollows of the earth and were subject to no laws or rules of conduct. When, however, man became civilized after having been given a revealed Law, those among the last-mentioned class of men who obeyed it were called انسان (man) by the Quran while those who were of a fiery and rebellious temperament were called جن (jinn). In this sense these two classes of human beings viz. انسان (man) and جن (jinn) still exist and people continue to change from one class to the other according as they become law-abiding and civilized or throw off the yoke of law and defy it. For a fuller treatment of this subject the reader is referred to "Sair-e-Rūḥānī" and "Tafsīr-e-Kabīr" by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, the Second Successor to the Promised Messiah.

Now for the interpretation of the verse the words, *And the jinn We had created before from the fire of hot wind,* signify that the people whom God has given the name of *jinn* were only men of fiery temperament who, on account of their unruly nature, became easily excited and would not submit to anybody. In fact, before the birth of Adam, men were of this nature and disposition. Adam was the first man who achieved a high standard of moral and social perfection and this is why Divine revelation which intimately deals with morals and sociology was, first of all, given to him. So those who accepted Adam's lead and joined the social system set up by him brought, as it were, a sort of death on their fiery temperament and received the imprint of God's allegiance and were thus called "clayey" (see the preceding verse) because of their resemblance to clay, which easily submits to any kind of impression with which it is imprinted or any kind of shape which is given to it. But because the jinn preferred individual freedom to association in a social system and refused to give their allegiance to anybody, they were called "fiery" (the present verse), which means that, like the flame of fire, they broke all restraints and went out of control. And they were called jinn also because they lived underground.

The objection that it is putting a far-fetched interpretation on the words, *And the jinn We had created before from the fire of hot wind,* to say that they merely signify a fiery disposition, possesses no weight. The objection has been answered by the Quran itself where it uses similar expressions. In 21:38, for instance, it says خلق الانسان من عجل i.e. *man is made of haste.* Now all commentators of the Quran agree that these words simply mean that man is by nature hasty and not that there is any material substance called "haste" of which he is made.

It is also possible that in the earliest stages of his creation man was a fiery being but, as the result of a long process of evolution and development, he finally became a clayey one, and Adam may have been the leader

29. And *remember* when thy Lord said to the angels, [a]'I am about to create man from dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape;**1735**

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّيْ خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

30. So [b]when I have fashioned him *in perfection* and have breathed into him of My Spirit, [c]fall ye down in submission to him.'**1736**

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهٗ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

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[a] 7:13; 38:77; 55:15. [b] 32:10; 38:73. [c] 2:35; 7:12; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117.

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or chief of those who were the first to attain full development in this process of evolution. This surmise finds an interesting analogy in the fact that the science of geology has proved that the earth too was, at first, a mass of hot fire which later became transformed into a clayey shell.

Finally, it may be noted that the popular belief that jinn, in the sense of invisible spirits, pay visits to men, play frolics with them, subject them to their control and take any kind of work they desire from them or, contrarily, help them to perform prodigious works etc., is a mere myth which has no foundation in fact, being at the same time contrary to the teachings of the Quran.

1735. Commentary:

In this verse by the word "angels" is meant the whole of creation, because angels constitute the first link of all creation and, as such, a command given to them really applies to the whole of creation. The verse purports to say that man has been given a sort of sovereignty or power over creation as a whole which has been made subservient to him; and angels have been bidden to bring about the results of human actions according as they are good or evil. In this respect the command is general. But when the command pertains to the time of a particular Prophet of God when a special Divine decree comes into operation, angels are bidden to help the Prophet of the day who, as it were, becomes the spiritual Adam of his time. Angels then help the Prophet against his opponents and render null all their schemes and machinations against him. In this connection it is significant that, whereas elsewhere the Quran speaks of the command of God to the angels to submit to "Adam," in the present and the following verses the word used is "man." For an explanation of the words, *from dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape,* see v. 27.

1736. Commentary:

In the present verse the example of the man who, in the beginning of human civilized life, achieved moral

31. [a]So the angels submitted, all of them together,

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ۙ۝۳۱

32. [b]But Iblīs *did not*; he refused to be among those who submit.[1737]

اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ۝۳۲

[a]2:35; 7:12; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117. [b]2:35; 7:12; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117.

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and spiritual perfection has been cited, and we are told that he was vouchsafed Divine revelation and angels were pressed into his service and were made to carry out his programme and plans. The mention of man or Adam here implies that the descending of the Word of God upon man and its preservation and protection have gone on from the beginning of creation.

The pronoun "him" in the expression سويته (I have fashioned him) refers not only to Adam but to every human being; for it is into every man that God breathes His spirit and angels are also appointed to serve him. When a peasant, for instance, ploughs his land and casts his seed in it, the angels are bidden to help him and produce the results of his labour. Thus the injunction, *fall ye down in submission to him,* given to the angels holds good for every human being. It appears from the Quran that whereas all things are subject to the control of angels, all things have been created for the service of man (45:14). This shows that angels are employed in the service of mankind.

1737. Commentary:

The word الا (but) has been used here in the form of مستثنى منقطع thus hinting that *Iblīs* was not one of the angels. This is also clear from the words كلهم اجمعون (all of them together) used about the angels in the preceding verse. Such emphatic expression could not be used about angels, if *Iblīs* had belonged to their community.

It may be asked why God punished Satan (vv. 35, 36) for his failure to carry out a command which was addressed only to angels (vv. 29, 30). In reply to this, it should be remembered that when a command is given to a person, it automatically applies to all those who are under his jurisdiction and subject to his control. As angels were commanded to submit to, and serve, Adam, therefore this command automatically applied to all those creatures of God who were made subject to the administration of angels. Elsewhere, the Quran itself makes the point clear that the command to angels implied a command to *Iblīs* (7:12, 13).

As man was endowed with the power to do both good and evil, it was necessary that both kinds of incentive should have been created for him. One incentive was created in the form of angels, and the other came into being in the form of Satan.

When God created Adam, angels

33. [a]*God* said, 'O Iblīs, what is the matter with thee that thou wouldst not be among those who submit?'

قَالَ يٰٓاِبۡلِيۡسُ مَا لَكَ اَلَّا تَكُوۡنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

34. [b]He answered, 'I am not going to submit to man whom Thou hast created from dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape.'**1738**

قَالَ لَمۡ اَكُنۡ لِّاَسۡجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقۡتَهٗ مِنۡ صَلۡصَالٍ مِّنۡ حَمَاٍ مَّسۡنُوۡنٍ ﴿۳۴﴾

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[a]7:13; 38:76. [b]7:13; 17:62; 18:51.

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were commanded to serve his cause and, along with angels, other things comprising the universe were also made subservient to man but, owing to error or negligence on his part, these things sometimes get out of his control and thus, becoming as it were the manifestations of Satan, begin to harm him. These evil things (e.g. fire, etc.) are intended to serve man and are subject to his control and man can derive great benefit from them; but when they get out of his control, they do him great harm.

It should also be remembered that, as already explained under 2:31-35 and 7:12-20, the dialogue between God and Adam or between God and Satan need not be taken literally. It is most probably intended to represent a state of affairs extending over a long period of time. The word *Iblīs* or Satan also includes all harmful persons and things representing the unseen Evil Spirit.

1738. Commentary:

The verse may be understood to mean that the arch-enemy of truth who opposed Adam spoke of the latter as if saying: "Here is a poor and humble fellow who justifies, and indeed glories in, the submission of all others to him. He and his comrades are a party of mental slaves who take pride in imitating others. But my nature rests high on the firm rock of freedom and independence. How then can I, his superior, bring myself so low as to obey his orders and carry out his wishes?" This dialogue, however, is no real talk between God and *Iblīs* but only an allegory, the sense being that the new order which was to be inaugurated by Adam was regarded by his chief opponent and those of his way of thinking as contrary to their sense of pride and their conception of freedom and, consequently, a source of humiliation for them. Satan, therefore, refused to give it his allegiance considering the old order to be better than that introduced by Adam. It is this sense of the comparative values of the two orders that is meant to be expressed in the terms طین (clay) and نار (fire) expressed in 38:77. For an explanation of *dry ringing clay, from black mud wrought into shape,* see under v. 27.

35. [a]*God* said, 'Then get out hence, for, surely, thou art rejected.[1739]

قَالَ فَاخۡرُجۡ مِنۡهَا فَاِنَّكَ رَجِيۡمٌ ۙ﴿۳۵﴾

36. And, [b]surely, on thee shall be *My* curse till the Day of Judgement.'[1740]

وَّ اِنَّ عَلَيۡكَ اللَّعۡنَةَ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ ﴿۳۶﴾

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[a]7:14,19; 38:78. [b]38:79.

1739. Commentary:

Iblīs or the Arch-Satan may not be deserving of punishment because it is, as it were, part of his being to incite men to evil deeds; but his manifestations and embodiments among human beings certainly are. It appears from the Quran that the person who opposed Adam was not *Iblīs* himself but only his manifestation, for we are told that he came to Adam and talked with him. If he was the very *Iblīs* who, as the Quran says, was from among the jinn, he might as well become visible to us and hence talk with us for, being the progeny of Adam, we are subject to all those influences to which Adam was. But such a thing has never happened. The fact that *Iblīs* does not come to us shows that the person who had a talk with Adam was not the *Iblīs* who was created of fire, but only his human manifestation whom *Iblīs* used as a tool to put Adam into trouble. This is what happens in the case of every Prophet and, in fact, in that of every human being.

The pronoun ها in the expression منها (hence) does not refer to the post-mortal Heaven as supposed by some commentators, because Heaven is a place where Satan could not possibly visit and tempt Adam. Nor could Adam be turned out of it; nor can the pronoun refer to the earthly garden in which Adam was placed; for when once Satan was turned out of it, he could not possibly enter it again. So the pronoun refers to that gate of apparent bliss in which men happen to live before the advent of a Prophet when, though they might be prey to many errors, yet, not having rejected a Prophet they are not deprived of divine favours which are here represented in the form of a جنة or garden.

1740. Important Words:

اللعنة (the curse) literally means, the state of being away from the mercy of God. See also 2:89.

Commentary:

The verse declares that the curse and maledictions of not only God and His Chosen Ones but also of all succeeding generations of men dog the footsteps of the opponents of God's Prophets, while the latter and their followers continue to be remembered with honour and affection. As Divine Reformers will continue to come till the end of days, so Satan and his votaries will also continue to be cursed till the Day of

37. [a]He said, ‘My Lord, then grant me respite till the day when they shall be raised.’1741

قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنْظِرْنِيْٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ
يُبْعَثُوْنَ ۝٣٧

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[a] 7:15; 17:63; 38:80.

Judgement. The curse referred to here does not, however, mean the Divine punishment which will have its full manifestation on the Day of Judgement but the curses and maledictions of men with which Satan and his followers will ever continue to be remembered in this world. See also 2:162 & 13:26.

1741. Commentary:

The preceding verses, like the relevant verses of chapters 2 & 7, refer to Adam and other Prophets in particular and to mankind in general. In reference to Adam and the Prophets, the breathing of the Divine Spirit would mean the descent of Divine revelation on men, and in reference to mankind in general, it would signify the perfection of the human soul. The words, *the day when they shall be raised*, will therefore, have different meanings in reference to the two classes of persons. When taken as referring to mankind in general the words would mean the time of the spiritual rebirth of man when, having attained that state of spiritual ascent, he not only becomes safe against spiritual fall but also contented and pleased with his Lord. In this sense, the protest of Satan mentioned in the present verse would mean that he should be granted respite to deceive and seduce man till the time of his (man’s) spiritual rebirth, when he joins the rank of the sincere servants of God and becomes immune from any further interference by Satan and his followers. This dialogue between God and Satan is, as hinted above, only an allegory or a metaphor.

That the words, *the day when they shall be raised,* signify the spiritual rebirth of man and not the Day of Resurrection after death, is confirmed by the fact that Satan asked for respite to be extended not to the day of death, but to the Day of Resurrection. As a matter of fact, there being no possibility of man being seduced by Satan after his death, Satan’s request to be allowed to tempt man up to the Day of Resurrection, which is to take place, after death, would be meaningless. It is thus evident that these words do not mean the actual Day of Resurrection after death but the day of man’s spiritual rebirth i.e. when he attains to the stage of نفس مطمئنة (the soul at peace) in his very life. In fact, Satan and his followers can tempt a man only so long as he does not attain to this very high state of spiritual development when he becomes immune against the onslaughts of Satan. When referring to Adam and his true Successors, i.e. the Prophets of God, the verse means that Satan and his followers are allowed to find fault with them and put all sorts of impediments and obstacles in their way till the day

38. [a]*God* said, 'Thou art of those that are granted respite,

39. [b]'Till the day of the appointed time.'[1742]

40. [c]He answered, 'My Lord, since Thou hast adjudged me as lost, I will surely make *evil* appear beautiful to them on the earth, and I will surely lead them all astray,[1743]

قَالَ فَاِنَّکَ مِنَ الۡمُنۡظَرِیۡنَ ۙ﴿۳۸﴾

اِلٰی یَوۡمِ الۡوَقۡتِ الۡمَعۡلُوۡمِ ﴿۳۹﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَاۤ اَغۡوَیۡتَنِیۡ لَاُزَیِّنَنَّ لَہُمۡ

فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ لَاُغۡوِیَنَّہُمۡ اَجۡمَعِیۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۰﴾

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[a]7:16; 17:64; 38:81. [b]38:82. [c]7:17, 18; 38:83.

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when they shall be raised, i.e. till the time when truth finally triumphs and the enemies of the Prophets are vanquished and many of them join the ranks of the Faithful. This time of the final victory of truth over falsehood or, in other words, of the Prophets over their adversaries, is here called the day of resurrection. See also v. 19.

1742. Commentary:

The words, *Till the day of the appointed time,* mean, as explained in v. 37 till the day when the Prophets and their followers will have achieved final victory over their adversaries and falsehood and its votaries will have been finally crushed.

This "day of the appointed time" comes to different Prophets at different times. To the Holy Prophet it came in his life-time, when he saw the complete triumph of his cause with his own eyes, and to Jesus it came centuries after his death.

1743. Commentary:

This verse too, gives a figurative word-picture of the condition of those disbelievers who, having failed to join the ranks of the Faithful in the beginning of the ministry of a Prophet, feel bitterly disappointed when they see him triumphing. The leaders of disbelief feel disgraced and humiliated at finding that others less important than themselves have outstripped them in believing and so, instead of accepting the Prophet, even at a later stage, they begin to oppose him. It is this state of mind of disbelievers that v. 3 depicts where it is mentioned that seeing the cause of Islam triumphing they wish they had accepted Islam in the beginning and thus had retained their former status and respect and had shared the blessings with which Muslims were favoured but having lost all their respect by rejecting the Prophet, they refrain from believing in spite of their desire and even increase in disbelief and opposition. This phenomenon has been repeated in the time of every Prophet of God, as is clear from 2:218, 4:45, 7:89 and 14:4.

41. [a]Except Thy chosen servants from among them.'1744

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

42. *God* said, 'This is a path *leading* straight to Me.1745

قَالَ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

43. Surely, [b]thou shalt have no power over My servants, except such of the [c]erring ones *as choose to* follow thee.'1746

إِنَّ عِبَادِيْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

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[a]38:83. [b]17:66; 34:22. [c]7:19; 17:64; 38:86.

1744. Commentary:

The verse mentions the specially chosen class of people i.e. Prophets, etc. who are granted protection against Satan. See also v. 43.

1745. Commentary:

The present verse explains the preceding verse in which it is said that Satan would not succeed in seducing God's chosen servants. It tells us how men can become God's "chosen servants" spoken of in the preceding verse and thereby become safe from satanic seduction. It lies on God, the verse purports to say, to show to men "His path" by revelation, and when they have seen this path, they proceed straight to God by treading it and Satan can then have no access to them. According to this sense of the verse the words صراط علی rendered in the text as, "a path to Me," would mean صراط بیانه علی i.e. a path the showing of which lies on Me. Indeed the chosen servants of God do not seek to find God's path by the help of their intellect alone, but invoke His help at every step. He then comes to their aid and, consequently, they become safe against the seduction of Satan. The second meaning of the verse is obtained when the word علی (to Me) is read with the word مستقیم (straight) as rendered in the text. In this case, the verse would mean that the chosen servants of God proceed straight to God, i.e. they have immediate access to Him. They have not to spend their lives in bootless search after God. Their search for Him meets with immediate success and they spend the remainder of their lives in comprehending and realizing His attributes and in traversing the path that leads to that highest stage of spiritual development where they are wholly lost in God and become united with Him. Indeed, it is not possible for Satan to have access to the chosen servants of God because the risk of the holy pilgrim's being misled by Satan remains only so long as he is in search of God. Once he has found access to Him, he is free from dangers and there remains for him only the gradual realization of God's infinite attributes, at the end of which lies the stage when he sees God face to face and becomes His manifestation.

1746. Important Words:

سلطان (power) is derived from سلط

44. And, surely, [a]Hell is the promised place for them all.1747

وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۚ۝٤٤

45. It has seven gates: *and* each gate has a portion of them allotted *to it*.1748

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ ۭ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ ۝٤٥ ع ٣/١٩/٣

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[a] 17:64; 38:86.

(*saluṭa*) meaning, he or it overcame or prevailed or predominated; or became established in superior power. سلطان among other things, means, might or power; possession of superior power; predominance; absolute dominion or authority; sovereign or ruling power. It also means, proof, evidence or argument (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse mentions another group of people who, too, are protected from the temptations of Satan. They do not belong to the category of Prophets or of those other specially chosen servants of God, referred to in v. 41 who get their guidance directly from God, but they, nevertheless, find out the truth through the help of God's Elect and His Prophets. With regard to such people the verse purports to say that they enjoy Divine protection to the extent that Satan has no سلطان (sovereign or dominating power) over them, though they are subject to his occasional attacks. There are to be found among them such weak of faith as sometimes choose to follow the suggestions of Satan and, consequently, falter and fall. But this happens only when they have actually become "erring ones," whereas before the actual commission of sin such people also enjoy Divine protection.

Incidentally, the verse also suggests that human nature is intrinsically pure. Only such men lose the right path as themselves defile their nature and choose to follow Satan. This idea has been further explained in the words قد خاب من دسّاها which mean that he alone perishes who destroys his own soul and buries it in the dust of sin (91:11).

1747. Commentary:

For an explanation of the word جهنم (Hell) see 2:207.

1748. Commentary:

As regards the seven gates of Hell, as stated in the present verse, it may be remembered that in Arabic the number seven, as also the number seventy, is often used to express not a specific numeral but the idea either of perfection or completeness or of profusion. In this sense the verse would signify that Hell will have the number of gates corresponding to the number and variety of offences committed by the sinful. The number "seven" may also refer to the seven exteroceptive senses viz. the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, pain and temperature, granted to man for receiving impressions from the outer world.

The words جزء مقسوم (a portion

R. 4.

46. Verily, [a]the righteous will be *placed* amid gardens and fountains *of water.*[1749]

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ۝٤٦

47. 'Enter therein with peace, in safety.'[1750]

اُدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۝٤٧

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[a] 51:16; 52:18; 68:35; 77:42; 78:32.

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allotted to it) signify that each of the inmates of Hell will enter it by the door corresponding to his offence. With regard to Heaven also it is reported in a saying of the Holy Prophet that each of its inmates will enter it by a door corresponding to his specific good deeds (Bukhārī, ch. on *Faḍā'il-e-Aṣḥābun-Nabī*).

The word جزء (a portion) does not mean, as is clear from this verse, part of one's body. It only means a section or party of sinners as distinct from others. This explains the meaning of this word in 2:261 where it signifies one bird as distinct from others and not different parts of one bird.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that elsewhere the Quran mentions the number of guards placed over Hell as nineteen (74:31). The reason for this might lie in the fact that man has been endowed with nine major senses i.e. the seven exteroceptive senses mentioned above, one proprioceptive sense of position in space and one enteroceptive sense arising from internal organs relating to sensations of hunger, thirst, etc. These, coupled with their nine spiritual counterparts together with the guardian or the controlling sense i.e. the will-power which dominates and controls all these different faculties of human nature, are nineteen in number and hence the nineteen guardians of Hell. This specific mention of the number of the guardian angels of Hell as nineteen forcefully draws attention to the fact that man becomes deserving of Hell on account of his having abused his God-given faculties.

1749. Commentary:

The verse means to say that whereas, as stated in the preceding verses, the followers of Satan on account of their rejection of the Divine Message will be cast into Hell, which means that in the next life a feeling of intense frustration and grief over lost opportunities will eat into their hearts and they will be given the punishment of burning fire, the believers will bask in the sunshine of God's favour and will be under the shadow of divine gardens, and fountains of divine knowledge will flow from their breasts.

1750. Commentary:

The words, *Enter therein with peace in safety,* seem to have been spoken to believers by angels. Just as angels encourage believers with the message of good cheer and divine pleasure in this life (10:65) they will come forward to convey the same

48. And [a]We shall remove whatever of rancour may be in their breasts *so that they will become* as brothers *seated* on thrones, facing one another.**1751**

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ اِخْوَانًا عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ ۝٤٨

49. [b]Fatigue shall not touch them there, [c]nor shall they *ever* be ejected therefrom.**1752**

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ ۝٤٩

[a]7:44. [b]35:36. [c]11:109; 18:109.

message to them in the life to come.

The words "peace" and "security" signify, respectively, freedom from internal anxieties that eat into the heart of a person and from external pain and punishment.

The word سلام (peace) also points to the permanent promise held out to believers, and expressed in the clause سلام قولا من رب الرحيم *'Peace'—a message from your Lord, the Merciful* (36:59).

The verse also shows that so long as the greeting of "peace" does not reach a man from God, he can enjoy no security. The verse further implies that in spite of the challenge of Satan that he would mislead believers (v. 40), the latter will not fail to enter the eternal abode of bliss.

1751. Commentary:

Elsewhere the Quran says that there are two Heavens for the righteous (55:47), one in the present life and the other in the next world. Regarding the latter, the verse under comment says that all vestige of rancour and malice will disappear from the hearts of its dwellers. Hence, in the present life also, only those can be said to be enjoying a truly heavenly life whose hearts are free from all feelings of rancour and spite against their brethren. The words, *seated on thrones facing one another*, are also intended to point to the state of loving equality existing among the Faithful.

The word سرر (thrones) has been repeatedly used in the Quran with regard to the dwellers of Paradise (37:45; 52:21; 56:16; 88:14). This is to hint that every dweller of Heaven will enjoy perfect freedom and independence, like a monarch on his throne. He will obey only God, obedience to Whom brings glory and power to man and bestows real freedom on him and he will not be subject to the orders of any other. In 16:32, we are told that the dwellers of Heaven will have what they shall wish for (see also 25:17, 39:35, & 42:23) which means that every inmate of Heaven will be supreme in his own respective sphere. This is the same as is hinted at in the words, *seated on thrones*.

1752. Commentary:

The words, *Fatigue shall not touch them there,* embody the indirect hint that Heaven shall be a place of constant and continuous work. In

50. [a]Tell My servants that I am surely the One Most Forgiving, the Merciful;[1753]

نَبِّئْ عِبَادِيْٓ اَنِّيْٓ اَنَا الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۙ ﴿۵۰﴾

51. And [b]*also* that My punishment is the grievous punishment.[1754]

وَاَنَّ عَذَابِيْ هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْاَلِيْمُ ﴿۵۱﴾

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[a]5:99. [b]5:99.

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spite of this, however, believers will feel none of the fatigue which is the inevitable result of work in this world, and so in Heaven there will also be no waste or decay, which are the inevitable result of fatigue.

The Quran repudiates the popular idea that in Heaven believers will have no work to do. On the contrary, it says that believers will be constantly engaged in work tending to the glorification of God. They will be there servants of God *par excellence* and a true servant does not sit idle but is constantly engaged in the service of his Master. Only the struggle against one's evil passions will cease in Heaven, for the obvious reason that there shall be no evil passions there (52:24), and one will continuously enjoy the work he is engaged in. Heaven will certainly not be like a poor-house in which there will be no work and where they will get their food gratuitously. According to the Quranic conception, Heaven is a place of constant work and worship and not an idlers' paradise.

For the words, nor shall they be ejected therefrom, see under 11:109.

1753. Commentary:

In the previous verses two classes of men were mentioned: firstly, those who had incurred the displeasure of God by their evil deeds and thus had made themselves deserving of punishment; secondly, the righteous who had attained salvation. The verse under comment is addressed to both these classes of men under the common appellation of "My servants" which contains a message of hope and good cheer for both of them. To sinners the verse says that they should not despair of God's mercy because, being الغفور (Most Forgiving), He can forgive all their sins, no matter how serious and numerous they may be. And the righteous are told that they should not become content with the good works they have already done, but should continue to excel in such deeds for, God being الرحيم (Merciful), the more they advance in virtue the greater measure of mercy will they receive at His hands in the form of an increased reward of their deeds. For the full meaning of the Divine attribute الرحيم (Merciful) see 1:1.

1754. Commentary:

Punishment inflicted by anyone beside God hardly deserves to be called punishment in the true sense of the word, for such a punishment is not only transitory, but there is also always a means of escape from it. But

52. And [a]tell them about Abraham's guests.[1755]

وقف لازم وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۝٥٢

53. [b]When they entered in unto him and said, 'Peace,' he answered, 'Verily, [c]we feel afraid of you.'[1756]

اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُوْنَ ۝٥٣

54. [d]They said, 'Fear not, we give thee glad tidings of a son *who shall be* endowed with knowledge.'[1757]

قَالُوْا لَا تَوْجَلْ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ۝٥٤

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[a]51:25. [b]11:70; 51:26. [c]11:71; 51:29. [d]11:71; 51:29.

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from God's punishment there is no refuge or escape. This is why the Holy Prophet taught his followers the beautiful prayer: لاملجا ولامنجا منك الا اليك i.e. there is no refuge against Thee, nor is there any place of escape from Thee except in Thyself (Bukhārī).

1755. Commentary:

The mention of Abraham here is intended merely to serve as an introduction to the story of Lot. This, as may be pointed out, is not accidental. In the Quran, the story of Lot has always been preceded by a reference to Abraham. This arrangement is intended to signify that Lot was a Prophet subordinate to Abraham. The story of Abraham has been introduced before the story of Lot because the people of Mecca considered themselves as having been descended from Abraham, and Lot was his near relation. The reference is intended to remind Meccans that they are familiar with the history of Abraham and, for that matter, with that of Lot, who was a recipient of Divine revelation and the rejection of whose revelation led to the punishment of those who rejected him. The placing of the account of Adam, the progenitor of the present race of mankind, and then of Abraham before that of Lot also helps to refute the false allegation that there is no order in the Quran.

1756. Commentary:

Probably signs of grief and sorrow were apparent on the faces of these messengers who had brought the news of an impending catastrophe. Abraham understood, either from the troubled expression on their faces or from their refusal to partake of the food offered to them (11:70, 71), the anguish of their hearts and suspected that the message which they had brought might prove a source of pain for him. It is also possible that the refusal of the guests to partake of the offered food led Abraham to fear that he might have, inadvertently, neglected some rule of hospitality in entertaining them.

1757. Commentary:

When the messengers noticed the

55. [a]He said, 'Do you give me the glad tidings in spite of the fact that old age has overtaken me? Of what then you give me the glad tidings?'[1758]

قَالَ اَبَشَّرْتُمُوْنِيْ عَلٰٓى اَنْ مَّسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُوْنَ ۝٥٥

56. They said, 'We have, indeed, given thee glad tidings in truth; be not therefore of those who despair.'[1759]

قَالُوْا بَشَّرْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْقٰنِطِيْنَ ۝٥٦

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[a] 11:73.

anxiety they had caused to Abraham they tried to allay it by saying that he need have no personal fear because for him they had brought nothing but glad tidings that related to the birth of an enlightened son.

Abraham and Lot were strangers in Canaan—their home at this time—having migrated from Ur of the Chaldees i.e. Iraq (Gen. 11:27, 28 & 12:4, 5). Seeing that it might cause Lot great grief to leave his present habitation, God revealed His wish to these men who apparently were native inhabitants of the country and sent them with the message to Lot so that they might advise him how to shift to another place and might console and comfort him.

The reason why the glad tidings about the birth of *a son who shall be endowed with knowledge* was given on this occasion is that, as Abraham was sure to be grieved at hearing of the impending destruction of the people of Lot, therefore by way of consolation he was told beforehand that, in place of the ignorant and disbelieving people who were going to be destroyed, an enlightened son, who would be the progenitor of a great nation, would be born to him. These words may also have been intended to refer to the fact that the promised son would be a Prophet, for, in the terminology of the Quran, knowledge and wisdom also denote spiritual knowledge and divine wisdom.

1758. Commentary:

فبم (of what then) is the abbreviated form of فبما which is formed of three words i.e. ف and ب and ما meaning respectively "then," "of" and "what."

Commentary:

In view of his advanced age, Abraham felt that the news of the birth of a son to him must have had its basis in Divine revelation. So, in order to make sure, he asked the messengers to tell him on what authority they gave him these glad tidings. The words فبم تبشرون not only mean, "Of what then you give me the glad tidings?" but also, "What is the basis of your glad tidings?"

1759. Commentary:

In answer to Abraham the

57. He said, ‘And [a]who can despair of the mercy of his Lord save those who go astray?’1760

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَّقْنَطُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اِلَّا الضَّآلُّوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾

58. He said, [b]‘What *now* is your *real* business, O ye messengers?’1761

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a] 12:88. [b] 51:32.

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messengers said that the glad tidings they had conveyed to him were from God and that if it had not been so, they had no right to give any tidings to him, the word حق (truth) also meaning both God and right. So they were giving to him the news on the basis of the truth that had been communicated to them from God in keeping with the appropriateness of the occasion. The words, *be not therefore of those who despair,* make it clear that these guests of Abraham were men and not angels, for if they had been angels, they would not have addressed such words to him, being well aware of the strong faith and the great spiritual eminence of Abraham. It was, however, possible for human beings to address him like that on account of their ignorance of his spiritual eminence.

1760. Commentary:

Abraham felt naturally hurt at the words, *be not therefore of those who despair*. He thought it an insult to his faith that anybody should think of him as despairing of God’s grace. Therefore, he strongly repudiated the implication and was not slow in expressing his justified indignation at it. It is worthy of note here that, whereas on the one hand Abraham was so hospitable that immediately on the arrival of the messengers he brought for them a roasted calf and, when they refrained from partaking of it, he feared that they were displeased with him for some unconscious failure on his part to accord them the honour they deserved as his guests (11:70-71); on the other hand, he indignantly protested against their remarks when the same guests seemed, inadvertently, to question his faith in God. Such is the jealousy and deep regard which the Prophets have for God.

Abraham meant to say that he had made the enquiry simply to ascertain whether it was glad tidings from God or only a conjecture, but now that he had come to know that the message was from God, he could have no possible doubt regarding its fulfilment.

1761. Commentary:

When Abraham realized that the real mission of these messengers was not to give to him the glad tidings of the birth of a son—for if it had been so, they would not have looked sad—but that they had come on some momentous mission, he hastened to

59. They said, [a]'We have been sent unto a guilty people[1762]

قَالُوْۤا اِنَّاۤ اُرْسِلْنَاۤ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ
مُّجْرِمِيْنَۙ ۝٥٩

60. [b]Excepting the family of Lot. Them we shall save all,[1763]

اِلَّاۤ اٰلَ لُوْطٍؕ اِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوْهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَۙ ۝٦٠

61. [c]Except his wife. We surmise that she shall be of those who remain behind.'[1764]

اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ قَدَّرْنَاۤ ۙ اِنَّهَا لَمِنَ
الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ۝٦١ ع

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[a]51:33. [b]29:33; 51:36. [c]7:84; 11:82; 26:172; 27:58.

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enquire of them their real business. This question of Abraham also shows that he regarded the messengers to be mere human beings and not angels. For if he had considered them to be angels, he would not have been surprised at their refusal to partake of food, as he would have known that angels do not eat food. As, however, he considered them to be human beings, their refusal to partake of the food offered to them made him apprehensive that a grievous affair was weighing upon their minds (11:70, 71).

1762. Commentary:

The messengers said that they had brought the news of punishment for a sinful people and this was the reason for their looking depressed and dejected.

1763. Important Words:

آل (family) is derived from the verb آل (*āla*). They say آل اليه i.e. he or it returned to it; or he resorted to it. آل عنه means, he returned or reverted from it. آل رعيته means, he ruled or governed his subjects. آل ماله means, he managed or tended his cattle. آل means, a man's family or relations or kinsfolk; the people of his house; his followers; his friends, and the like. By the آل of the Holy Prophet are meant, according to some, his followers whether relations or others, and his relations whether followers or not; or, as some say, his family and his wives (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:50.

Commentary:

By using the words, *Excepting the family of Lot*, the messengers alluded, on the one hand to the fact that "the guilty people" (see the preceding verse) were none other than the tribe of Lot and, on the other hand, they allayed Abraham's anxiety regarding Lot and his family. Apparently, the messengers were commissioned to lead Lot and his family to a place of safety.

The word اجمعين (all) shows that those who were to be saved along with Lot were a party of persons, and not merely his two daughters, as the Bible has it (Gen. 19:15,16).

1764. Important Words:

قدرنا (We surmise) is derived from قدر (*qadara*) which means, he

R. 5.

62. And [a]when the messengers came unto the family of Lot,[1765]

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اٰلَ لُوۡطِ الۡمُرۡسَلُوۡنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

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[a] 11:78; 29:34.

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measured or computed or estimated. قدّر (*qaddara*) means, he meditated or considered; he supposed or conjectured or surmised. When used about God, it means, He decreed or appointed or ordained (Aqrab & Lane). See also 2:21.

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that out of the family of Lot his wife would not be saved, as she would remain behind and would not leave the city with Lot. The messengers used the expression قدّرنا which here means, "we surmise" because they were not sure about her fate and had only guessed that she would remain behind. Evidently, one or more of them might have had a dream regarding this affair and, naturally, they were not quite sure about its interpretation but had only inferred that she would not be saved. Or it may be that, having regard to the feelings of Abraham, they did not like to stress the point of the sad end of Lot's wife and expressed it vaguely.

Here is another divergence between the description of this affair as given in the Bible and the Quran. The Bible says: And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being Merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city (Gen. 19:15,16).

The Quran, on the other hand, says that Lot had been informed beforehand that his wife would not leave the city with him but would remain behind (29:34). It can easily be judged which of these two accounts is more natural and nearer the truth. According to the Quran, she not only remained behind but was from the very beginning destined to do so, but the Bible says that the angels led her out of the city, although they knew that God had decreed that she would share its fate. The Bible thus depicts the angels to be acting against the decree of God, which is evidently wrong.

1765. Commentary:

By using the word المرسلون (messengers), the Quran hints that the bearers of the message were men.

The Bible, however, sometimes mentions them as men (Gen. 18:2,16,22) and sometimes as angels (Gen. 19:1) and in the latter case even goes so far as to say that Lot prepared for them unleavened bread (Gen. 19:3) as if angels partook of the same. Such inconsistencies of the Bible provide a proof of the fact that it has suffered materially from later interpolations.

63. He said, [a]'Verily, you are a party of strangers.'[1766]

قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

64. They said, 'Nay, but we have come to thee with that about which they doubted.[1767]

قَالُوْا بَلْ جِئْنٰكَ بِمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

65. And we have come to thee with the truth, and surely we are truthful.[1768]

وَ اَتَيْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ اِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾

66. [b]So go forth, with thy family in the *latter* part of the night, and follow thou in their rear. And let none of you look back, and *now* proceed to where you are commanded.'[1769]

فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ اَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ وَّامْضُوْا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

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[a]51:26. [b]11:82.

1766. Commentary:

The word منكرون (strangers) includes wayfarers. It is thus suggested that Lot thought these men to be mere wayfarers whose visit to the place was simply casual, whereupon these messengers hastened to inform him that they had come to him on a special mission (see the succeeding verse).

1767. Commentary:

The fact that the people of Lot doubted the truth of what he told them shows that they had already been warned of the coming punishment by Lot. The mission of the messengers was thus only to inform Lot that the time of the threatened punishment had arrived, and that he and those who believed in him should at once leave the place.

1768. Commentary:

As Abraham had previously questioned the messengers regarding the source of their message (v. 55), they now forestalled a repetition of a similar question by Lot and volunteered the statement that they had brought a definite Divine Message and by way of emphasis added the words, *surely we are truthful.*

1769. Commentary:

The pronoun هم (their) in the expression ادبارهم (their rear) used in this verse shows that, according to the Quran, the party who left the city with Lot did not consist of his two daughters only, as stated in the Bible (Gen. 19), but of other believers as well, some of whom must have been males, as the plural masculine

67. And [a]We communicated to him this decree that the root of them was to be cut off by the morning.[1770]

وَقَضَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِ ذٰلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَقْطُوْعٌ مُّصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

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[a] 6:46; 7:73, 85.

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pronoun shows. This view is supported by another passage in the Bible (Gen. 18:32) which shows that Abraham was aware that there were some men in the town of Lot who had accepted his Message. Abraham was not, however, sure of their number.

The words لا يلتفت منكم احد (let none of you look back) do not here mean, as most commentators have taken them to mean literally "looking back." The expression has been used figuratively, meaning "giving thought to," or "feeling anxious for," those left behind. The above quoted words thus signify, "do not mind the disbelievers, and leave them to perish." As against this the Bible says that Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). The Quranic version is certainly more natural, for it not only denies her looking back but declares that she was one of those who remained behind (29:34). The fact that the Bible, which was written much earlier than the Quran, should interweave it with such an incredible tale, which the Quran rejects, lends strong support to the latter's claim to be the revealed Word of God.

The words, *where you are commanded,* confirms the interpretation given above, viz. that the messengers had come to tell Lot where he should go after leaving the condemned city. They had come to inform Lot of his destination in pursuance of a Divine command.

The messengers suggested to Lot that he should *follow in their rear* so that he might be the last in the party to leave the city. This was evidently intended as a precaution for the safety of all members of the party because since Lot was a Prophet for whom Divine protection was particularly intended the threatened punishment could not overtake the city until he was safely out of it.

1770. Important Words:

قضينا (We communicated). They say قضى بين الخصمين i.e. he judged and decided between the two litigants. قضى الشيء قضاء means, he determined or designed and accomplished or completed the thing properly. قضى الامر means, he decreed or ordained or commanded the thing. قضى حاجته means, he fulfilled or attained or satisfied his want or desire. قضى دينه means, he paid off his debt. قضى الصلوة means, he performed his Prayer. قضى الشيء means, he declared and explained the thing. قضى اليه الامر means, he communicated or conveyed the matter to him. قضى العهد means, he kept or fulfilled the pledge. قضى اجله او نحبه means, he died (lit. he completed his term), ضربه فقضى عليه means, he struck him and thereby killed him (Aqrab & Lane).

68. And [a]the people of the city came rejoicing.[1771]

وَجَآءَ اَهۡلُ الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ يَسۡتَبۡشِرُوۡنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

69. He said, [b]‘These are my guests, so put me not to shame;[1772]

قَالَ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ضَيۡفِىۡ فَلَا تَفۡضَحُوۡنِ ﴿٦٩﴾

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[a]11:79. [b]11:79.

Commentary:

The words of this verse are spoken by God and not by the messengers, as it might appear from the context. As the messengers had come to tell Lot that the time of the threatened punishment of his people had already arrived, so in this verse God says to Lot that what the messengers had communicated to him was undoubtedly true, and as the time was very short, he should quit the place at once. It is this direct revelation of God that has been mentioned in the present verse and possibly in the previous one as well.

The word دابر among other things signifies, the root of a thing. But the word "root" does not here mean, "great men" (who are certainly the root of a tribe or clan) but the entire tribe collectively, for the word "root" also symbolizes the whole tree. In fact, the words, *Excepting the family of Lot,* occurring in v. 60 show that in the present verse this word cannot be taken in the sense of "great men" for, according to the above quoted verse, both the great and the small men of Lot’s people were destroyed, with the exception of a few members of his family. Moreover, the word دابر also means "the last remnant." So the verse definitely signifies that all the people of Lot were destroyed except only a few. See also 6:46.

The word مصبحين (by the morning) shows that Lot was bidden to journey with his family in the latter part of the night so that his wicked countrymen might not discover their absence and pursue and overtake them before the threatened punishment which was to take place at sunrise (v. 74).

1771. Commentary:

From the Bible it appears that the مدينة (city) mentioned in this verse was the seat of kings (Gen. 14:17, 21). يثرب the town to which the Holy Prophet fled from Mecca was also called مدينة (city) by him, which implied the prophecy that after having become free from epidemics which ravaged it before, it would become a great town and the Centre of Islam.

1772. Commentary:

Lot had been told by his people not to bring strangers into the city and now that he had brought these guests he knew that he would be taken to task for having defied their warnings. He therefore asked them not to disgrace him by mentioning this matter before his guests.

70. And fear Allah and disgrace me not.'[1773]

وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ ۝٧٠

71. They said, 'Did we not forbid thee *to entertain* all *sorts of* people?'[1774]

قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٧١

72. [a]He said, 'These are my daughters if you must do something.'[1775]

قَالَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ بَنٰتِيْٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ۝٧٢

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[a] 11:79.

1773. Commentary:

Lot further begged his people not to disgrace him for offering hospitality to the wayfarers, because that was, after all, a good act in the sight of God and did not deserve censure or condemnation.

1774. Commentary:

As there existed a state of war between the people of Lot and the neighbouring tribes, his people had warned Lot not to bring strangers into the city. But as travel was neither safe nor comfortable in those parts of the country, Prophet Lot used to harbour lonely wayfarers in his house. This was resented by his people, who were looking for a pretext to expel him from the city, being already tired of his teaching and preaching. But they could not do so without a valid excuse, because Lot was a full-fledged citizen and his daughters were married in the town. Now, however, they found a good excuse for venting their wrath on him for his having given shelter to strangers in his house despite their warnings. From this it is clear that Lot's people did not come to him with the wicked intention of committing sodomy with his guests, but to convey to him the warning that they had found a valid excuse to expel him from the town. This was the reason of their rejoicing. The story that they were pleased because they found an opportunity for committing sodomy with Lot's guests is quite baseless, because it is out of keeping with the context. In fact, the whole story has been unthinkingly borrowed from the Bible by some simple-minded commentators (Gen. 19:5). If Lot's people had come with the evil intention of satisfying their unnatural lust on this occasion, then, instead of being displeased with Lot, they should have been pleased with him, because he had provided them with such an opportunity.

1775. Commentary:

The verse states that Lot offered to the infuriated people his daughters as hostages against any possible infringement on his part or that of his guests of the interests of the town. As his daughters were married to townsmen, he, their father, could do nothing against the interests of the town; and if he did anything of that sort, they could easily wreak vengeance on him

73. By thy life, these *too* in their *mad* intoxication are wandering in distraction—[1776]

لَعَمۡرُكَ إِنَّهُمۡ لَفِي سَكۡرَتِهِمۡ يَعۡمَهُونَ ۝٧٣

through his daughters.

Some Muslim commentators, blindly following the story of the Bible (Gen. 19:8), have interpreted this verse as meaning that Lot offered those people his daughters for the gratification of their lust. This interpretation is absurd. No sensible man, much less a Prophet of God, would seek to deflect a man from one sinful act by suggesting to him the commission of another and more heinous sin. It is inconceivable that Prophet Lot should have offered his own daughters to those wicked people that they should satisfy their lust with them instead of with the strangers. Human imagination staggers at such a foolish and wicked idea. Some other commentators are of the opinion that, being an elderly man and a Prophet, Lot referred to the women of the tribe as his daughters, meaning that these people should go in unto their wives rather than gratify their lust unnaturally. This interpretation, though much more sensible than the Biblical story, is also not admissible being in conflict with the context (see also 11:79).

It may also be noted here that the words ان كنتم فاعلين (if you must do something) do not, according to Arabic idiom, mean "if you must commit sodomy." They simply mean, "if you must do something."

1776. Important Words:

لعمرك (by thy life). عمر (*'amrun*) is the same as عمر (*'umurun*) and means, life or the age to which life extends or the period in which the body is inhabited by life. The Arabs say لعمرك لافعلن كذالك i.e. by thy life I will assuredly do such a thing. The expression لعمرك therefore means, by thy life; or by thy religion, for عمر (*'amrun*) also means religion (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse is addressed to the Holy Prophet by God and not to Lot by the angels, as some commentators seem to think.

The expression لعمرك (by thy life) therefore beautifully hints at the purity of the Holy Prophet's life by citing it as a witness against the wickedness of evildoers.

The case of Lot was in fact similar to that of the Holy Prophet in more than one respect. Just as the people of Lot prohibited him from entertaining outsiders, fearing lest the latter should conspire against them, similarly the Meccans prohibited the Holy Prophet from having any dealings with strangers, for they feared that he might form an alliance with outside people and thus seek to do them harm. And just as Lot had his two daughters married among his enemies, similarly the Holy Prophet had three of his daughters married among disbelievers: Ruqayyah and Ummi Kulthūm having been married to 'Utbah and Shaibah, the two sons of Abū Lahab and Zainab to Abūl 'Āṣ

74. [a]Then the punishment seized them at sunrise.**1777**

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

75. [b]We turned it upside down, and We rained upon them stones of clay.**1778**

فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

[a]11:82. [b]11:83.

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bin ar-Rabī'. The relevancy of the present verse to the previous one is that the Holy Prophet felt grieved by the reference to Lot's daughters having been married among his opponents, for this reminded him of his own daughters who were married among disbelievers and of their being likely to suffer at the hands of their husbands. God has therefore here consoled the Holy Prophet by saying to him, "Your enemies have indeed proved more wicked than the people of Lot, who at least abstained from persecuting his daughters. But We offer your whole life as a witness that even as Lot's people were punished by God, your people, who are the greater sinners, will not escape God's punishment for persecuting you who are by far a greater Prophet."

It may also be briefly mentioned in passing that God's swearing by His creatures is quite different from man's swearing by them. When a man swears by a thing other than God, he does so to express his special reverence for it, which is denounced by the Quran. But God swears by a thing in order to offer it as a witness for establishing the truth of a certain claim and He, being the Creator of all things, has the right to offer anything as a witness. But man cannot do so. It is therefore not allowed to him to swear by anything except God. For a full discussion of the subject of "oaths" in the Quran and their significance see under 75:2.

1777. Important Words:

الصيحة (the punishment) which is derived from صاح i.e. he cried aloud or shouted. صيحة means, a vehement crying; an evil or mischief that comes on one suddenly; punishment; a hostile incursion by which a tribe is surprised (Lane). See also 11:68.

Commentary:

In v. 67 the time for the punishment which was to overtake Lot's people is indicated by the expression مصبحين (by the morning) but in the present verse it is expressed by مشرقين (at sunrise). This may appear to be a discrepancy in the words used by the Quran. But there is no real discrepancy, because the expression مصبحين (by the morning) signifies those entering on the period from dawn till sunrise, and مشرقين means, at sunrise. It is thus clear that there is no real conflict in the meanings of the two words. The calamity actually occurred at sunrise. This is supported by the Bible (Gen. 19:23, 24). For the nature of the calamity see the following verse.

1778. Important Words:

سجيل (clay). See 11:83.

76. [a]Surely, in this are Signs for those who can read *signs*.[1779]

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَٰتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ۝٧٦

77. And [b]it lies on a road that *still* exists.[1780]

وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ ۝٧٧

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[a]29:36; 51:38. [b]37:138.

Commentary:

The houses of Lot's people were turned upside down. This punishment corresponded to their unnatural offence. The punishment apparently took the form of a severe earthquake which raised portions of the stony soil and buried them under; or the houses had walls of stones and rubble laid in clay and these were violently shattered and the debris thrown all around.

1779. Important Words:

المتوسمين (those who can read signs) is derived from توسم (*twassama*) which again is derived from وسم which means, he stamped or marked or branded a thing. توسم الشيء means, he deliberated over the thing and considered it or examined it or did so repeatedly to know it or obtain a clear knowledge of it; he recognized the thing by an external sign. توسمت فيه الخير means, I perceived goodness in him or I read signs of goodness in him (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The use of the word متوسمين here is significant. It was intended to draw the attention of the Meccans to the fact that there was living among them one who was like Lot and to whom they had meted out the same treatment as was meted out to Lot by his people, and therefore, they could easily imagine what kind of treatment they should expect from God. The verse purports to say that if the people of the Holy Prophet did not repent, God would punish them as He had punished the persecutors of Lot. The verse invites them to ponder over the fate of the people of Lot and read the signs of the time and take a lesson from them.

As a matter of fact, the fate of the disbelieving Meccans was somewhat similar to that of the people of Lot. In the Battle of Badr a strong gale which miraculously arose drove into the faces of the Meccans stone particles which blinded them and proved the immediate cause of their ignominious defeat. Again, in a metaphorical sense, the struggle of the Meccans against the Holy Prophet led to the complete overthrow of their social order. Disbelievers who held a high position in Meccan society in pre-Islamic days went down in the social scale and those poor Muslims who enjoyed no great position in public esteem and who accepted the Holy Prophet in the early years of his mission came to occupy positions of trust and eminence in the new social order. This was indeed a great earthquake which turned things upside down, as the preceding verse puts it.

1780. Important Words:

مقيم (that still exists) is derived from

78. Surely, [a]in this is a Sign for believers.[1781]

اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَۃً لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿ؕ۷۸﴾

79. And [b]the People of the Wood *too* were surely wrongdoers.[1782]

وَ اِنۡ کَانَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡاَیۡکَۃِ لَظٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿ۙ۷۹﴾

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[a]29:45. [b]26:177; 38:14; 50:15.

اقام which again is derived from قام which means, he stood up or he stood still in his place. اقام means, he remained, continued, stayed, tarried or resided in a place; he remained stationary. They say اقام على حال i.e. he continued in a state or condition. مقيم means, that which lasts; lasting; continuing; unceasing (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:4; 4:6 & 5:98.

Commentary:

A way is said to be مقيم (that still exists) when it continues to be used by wayfarers. The way referred to here i.e. the one connecting Arabia with Syria is actually still in use, thus fulfilling the prophecy implied in the name given to it in the Quran. The way passes along the Dead Sea which is locally known as بحرلوط the Sea of the Prophet Lot.

1781. Commentary:

Compare this verse with v. 76 where the word متوسمين (those who can read signs) is used in place of مومنين (believers). In the former case the story referred to was that of Lot. The bearing it had upon the life and career of the Holy Prophet could be noticed and understood only by men who possessed comparatively greater intelligence and insight. Therefore, the word متوسمين was used in v. 76. But as the ruined city lay on a public highway, any God-fearing person who passed by that way could, by seeing its ruins, ponder over its history and profit by the lesson it taught. This is why the word مومنين (believers) has been used in the present verse.

1782. Important Words:

ان (surely) is a common Arabic word giving a number of meanings, e.g., if; not; verily or surely; because; when. It is sometimes redundant (Lane).

الايكة (the Wood), the plural of which is الايك is derived from the verb ايك (*ayika*). ايك الشجر means, the trees grew thick and formed a wood. الايكة means, a collection of numerous tangled or dense trees, particularly (though not necessarily) of the kind called سدر and الاك (wild berries); a thicket (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The word الايكة seems to refer to Midian in the vicinity of which there existed tangled and luxuriant trees after which these people or a section thereof were called اصحاب الايكة. Midian lay in the Sinai Peninsula, a few miles from the sea. It was originally the name of a tribe who were descended from Abraham through Keturah and who had settled in the locality known after their ancestor

80. So [a]We chastised them *also*. And they both lie on a manifest way.**1783**

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۘ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَبِإِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ۝٨٠

[a]26:190; 38:15; 50:15.

Midian, son of Keturah. They were good businessmen and carried on trade with India through Bahrain or Aden. When, however, their business flourished, they resorted to illicit methods in trade (26:184).

The fact that, according to the Quran, the Prophet Shu'aib was sent both to اصحاب الایکة i.e. People of the Wood (26:177, 178) and اصحاب مدین i.e. People of Midian (11:85) shows that both are the names of the same people or, rather, of two sections of the same people who had adopted two different kinds of trade, one living on commerce and the other keeping herds of camels and sheep and selling milk, wool, etc. Two sections of the same people living in the same town are generally seen to be following different trades in such towns as are situated on the borders of jungles and forests. So the people of *al-Aikah* is another section of the tribe of Shu'aib (26:177, 178) who has also been spoken of as having been sent to the people of Midian (7:86, 11:85 & 29:37).

Further evidence of the close relationship of the "People of the Wood" with the "People of Midian" is furnished by the fact that identical faults have been ascribed in the Quran to both. Speaking of the latter, the Quran says: *So give full measure and full weight, and diminish not unto people their things, and create not disorder in the earth after it has been set in order* (7:86), while Shu'aib addresses the former in the following words: *Give full measure, and be not of those who give less. And weigh with the true balance. And diminish not to men their things, nor act corruptly in the earth, making mischief* (26:182-184). This shows that the "People of the Wood" and the "People of Midian" (to whom Prophet Shu'aib was sent) belonged to the same parent tribe and had adopted different forms of trade. It may also be noted here that Midian was both the name of the tribe and the town they lived in, at the head of the gulf of 'Aqabah, and near it was situated the wilderness or *Aikah* abounding in dwarf trees of the species of wild plums and affording shelter to camels, sheep and goats. For a description of the ایکة or wood near Midian, see "The Gold Mines of Midian" by Sir Richard Francis Burton.

1783. Important Words:

امام (way) is derived from ام (*amma*). They say امه i.e. he repaired to or directed his course to him or it. امام *inter alia*, means, a road or way; a manifest road or way (Lane).

مبین (manifest) means, distinct from others; apparent; manifest; plain (Lane). See also 2:169.

R. 6.

81. And the People of the Ḥijr *also* did treat the Messengers as liars.[1784]

وَلَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡحِجۡرِ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۸۱﴾

Commentary:

Commentators differ as to the reference of the word "both" in this verse. Most of them take it as referring to the habitations of Lot and Shu‘aib, the account of the people of Lot having just preceded that of the people of Shu‘aib. But the more correct view seems to be that the word "both" refers to the habitations of "the People of the Wood" and "the People of Midian," reference to the latter being understood. The habitations of both lay on a much-frequented highway.

It may also be noted that in the case of the city of Lot the highway has been called سبیل مقیم i.e. the way that still exists (v. 77) signifying that it would continue to be used. Consequently that road has remained in constant use up to the present time. In the case of the habitation of اصحاب الایکۃ i.e. the People of the Wood, the road has been called امام مبین i.e. a manifest way. Consequently, the old road which connected Asia with Egypt has now ceased to be used by caravans, though, as the word مبین (manifest) hints, the track still remains.

1784. Important Words:

اصحاب الحجر (People of the Ḥijr). حجر is derived from حجر (*ḥajara*) which means, he prevented or hindered or interdicted. See also 2:75. حجر (Ḥijr) means, forbidden, unlawful, inviolable or sacred; garden or walled garden of palm-trees prohibited to the public; a fortress; a wall of stones built round a house; the place round which such a wall is made; relationship that prohibits marriage; understanding or intelligence, because it forbids that which it does not behove one to do; bosom or breast; figuratively also protection. The word also means, the country or land of Thamūd (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

Ḥijr lay between Tabūk and Medina. Here lived the people of Thamūd to whom Ṣāliḥ was sent as a Warner. The city of this tribe appears to have been largely built of stones. It was surrounded by a stone wall and ramparts. Hence this name.

It is worthy of note that though only one Prophet, Ṣāliḥ appears to have been sent to these people, in the verse under comment they are condemned as having rejected the Messengers of God. The same expression has been used in 26:106, 124, 142, 161 & 177 where the tribes mentioned are said to have rejected all Prophets, while as a matter of fact each one of these different tribes rejected only a particular Prophet who was sent to them. This shows that in the sight of God the rejection of one Prophet

82. And We gave them Our Signs, but they turned away from them.[1785]

وَاٰتَيۡنٰهُمۡ اٰيٰتِنَا فَكَانُوۡا عَنۡهَا مُعۡرِضِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۸۲﴾

means the rejection of all because, first, the basic teachings of all Divine Messengers are the same and so the rejection of one Prophet implies the rejection of all others, and, secondly, the rejection of a Prophet implies rejection of God, Who is the Sender of all Prophets. This is why Jesus warned the Jews that by rejecting him they were rejecting Moses; for if they had really believed in Moses, they should not have hesitated to accept him (John 5:46). This is true of all Prophets and Messengers of God. He who rejects the Prophet of his own day shows by his act of rejection, that if he had lived in the time of any other Prophet, he would have rejected him also. Hence it is that the rejection of one Prophet, according to the Quran, is tantamount to the rejection of all Prophets and the acceptance of one is tantamount to the acceptance of all of them. See also 2:137, 286; 3:85 & 4:153.

The next few verses of the present *Sūrah* and some opening verses of the following *Sūrah* embody mighty prophecies and deal with subjects of very great import.

1785. Commentary:

In the foregoing verses three different peoples have been mentioned: (1) the people of Lot; (2) the people of Shu‘aib; and (3) the people of Ṣāliḥ. The order in which they have been mentioned is noteworthy. They have not been mentioned in their chronological order but in the order of the distance of their habitations from Mecca. The land of the people of Lot was the most distant of the three places and so it has been mentioned first. Next in order of distance were the people of *Aikah*, and they have been put next. Ḥijr being situated between Tabūk and Medina, the tribe of Thamūd were the nearest of the three and it has consequently been mentioned last of all. In the order of time the people of Ḥijr preceded the people of Lot and the people of *Aikah* came last. This unusual order has been adopted in preference to the more natural one with a view to producing the greatest psychological effect, the tribe that was least known to the Arabs being mentioned first and the tribe which the Arabs knew best being mentioned last.

It may also be incidentally mentioned here that in this *Sūrah* mention has been made of those peoples in whom the art of writing was not much in vogue, and who were regarded by the Arabs as their ancestors. Adam is, of course, the common progenitor of mankind. Lot was a near relative of Abraham and as such, was among the ancestors of the Arabs. The tribe of Shu‘aib were cousins of the Ishmaelites, and became ultimately absorbed by them. The tribe of Thamūd were a pure Arab tribe.

83. And [a]they used to hew out houses in the mountains, in security.**1786**

وَكَانُوْا يَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾

84. [b]But the punishment seized them in the morning,**1787**

فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾

85. And all that they had earned availed them not.**1788**

فَمَاۤ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾

86. And [c]We have not created the heavens and the earth and all

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا

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[a]7:75; 26:150. [b]7:79; 11:68. [c]3:192; 16:4; 38:28.

1786. Important Words:

كانوا ينحتون (they used to hew out). نحت means, he cut or hewed; or he formed or fashioned by cutting or paring or clipping. The Arabs say نحت على الكرم (in the passive voice) i.e. he was fashioned after the model of generosity, viz. he was generous by nature (Lane).

بيوتا (houses) is the plural of بيت which is derived from بات i.e. he passed the night. بيت means, a chamber; a house or dwelling; a tent. It also means, a verse (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse shows that the tribe of Thamūd were a civilized, powerful and rich people. They had separate summer and winter resorts and led secure and comfortable lives. Even when they went to the hills in summer for recreation and change of climate, and left their winter habitations, they felt free from attacks from any quarter. The words, *they used to hew out houses in the mountains,* are also intended to hint at the highly developed state of their architecture.

1787. Commentary:

It appears from 7:79 that the calamity referred to in this verse was an earthquake.

1788. Commentary:

The verse means to say that though the people of Ṣāliḥ built big houses and huge buildings and felt themselves secure, yet actually these very buildings proved the means of their destruction, for the Divine punishment came upon them in the form of an earthquake, and so the hugeness of their buildings added to the severity of their calamity. The verse thus implies a strong warning for the enemies of the Holy Prophet to the effect that they should not rely on their wealth and possessions as a means of protection against the wrath of God, because when Divine punishment comes, material means and resources, instead of being a protection, actually prove the ruin of those who possess them.

that is between the two but in accordance with *the requirements of* wisdom; and [a]the hour is sure to come. So turn away *from them* in a comely manner.1789

بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيْلَ ﴿۸۶﴾

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[a]20:16; 40:60.

1789. Important Words:

فاصفح (So turn away) is derived from صفح (*ṣafaḥa*). صفح عنه means, he turned away from and left him. This expression also means, he turned away from his sins or faults i.e. he forgave him. صفح الناس means, he watched and looked into the affairs and conditions of the people. صفح (*ṣafḥun*) is the infinitive noun from it, meaning also the side of a thing. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word ساعة (Hour) is used to signify both the post-mortal Day of Judgement and the time fixed in this life for the punishment of the enemies of truth and the triumph of believers. The verse means to say that a careful study of the creation or the universe and its working leads to the conclusion that a great purpose underlies it. It not only proves that there is inevitably going to be a day of ultimate reckoning after death, but that even in this world truth ultimately triumphs and falsehood comes to grief. If human life were really confined to a short and temporary existence on this earth, then the vast organization of the illimitable universe would be much too extravagant a provision. The creation of the universe and the wonderful design and purpose that pervades it surely leads to the one inescapable inference that human life is much more than the limited, temporary and short existence on this earth. It is an insult to human intelligence to think that man has been created just to eat, drink and be merry for a while and then die an eternal death. The wonderful creation of the universe strongly repudiates such an idea. Human existence has a grand purpose to fulfil and the fulfilment of that purpose presupposes that it should extend to a time when man should attain to that high spiritual state for which he is created. Study of the human mechanism shows that machinery of such infinite complexity could not have for its object only the preservation of the finite physical life.

Similarly, a study of the creation of this universe and its mighty and wonderful working leads to the conclusion that in this life truth must ultimately prevail against untruth. The verse points out that just as it is impossible for the earth to subsist for one single day without the physical heavens, similarly, there could be no spiritual life divorced from the heaven of spiritual truths. Just as the

87. Verily, it is thy Lord Who is the Great Creator, the All-Knowing.[1790]

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۝

earth can discharge its proper functions only so long as it forms a part of the whole universe, even so can man save himself from destruction only by forming a part of the spiritual system around him. The verse, therefore, purports to warn opponents of the Holy Prophet that, as they have cut themselves off from the heaven of spiritual truths, their wealth and possessions would not avail them in the least and the time has now come for their destruction and for the success and prosperity of those who have believed.

It may be noted here that the verse emphatically speaks of the impending destruction of disbelievers. History bears witness to the fact that after the promulgation of this prophecy, the condition of the Meccan idolaters changed quickly from bad to worse until their power was completely broken and Islam reigned supreme in the land.

It may further be noted that the verse under comment lends support to the view that this *Sūrah* was revealed towards the close of the Meccan period. At any rate the present verses must have belonged to that period, because they clearly speak of the imminent destruction of the Meccans. The first few verses of the next *Sūrah* also deal with the same topic.

The words, *So turn away from them in a comely manner,* signify that now when the time of the punishment of the Meccans has come, the Holy Prophet should cease to hold religious discussions with them.

1790. Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of the imminent destruction of disbelievers and the present verse says that God never hesitates to destroy the wicked because, being the Great Creator, He can easily bring into existence a better people after the destruction of their predecessors. This is the implication of the Divine attribute خلاق (the Great Creator) used in the intensified form.

The attribute عليم (All-Knowing) points to the fact that God is well aware of the new order which will shortly replace the old. It will be a much better order and at its advent no one will regret the old order. It may be noted how in this one brief word عليم (All-Knowing), the Quran has condensed so much meaning. The word hints at the excellence of the new social and political order to be introduced by Islam.

It may further be noted that among the first few verses of this *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet was told to leave the disbelievers alone, victims to vain hopes, to eat and enjoy themselves for a while (v. 4). The verse under comment says that the time of their promised respite had now come to an end.

The Divine attributes "Great Creator" and "All-Knowing" also furnish an answer to those who wondered whence were to arise the

88. And [a]We have, indeed, given thee the seven oft-repeated *verses*, and the Great Quran.**1791**

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ
وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ ﴿۸۸﴾

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[a] 39:24.

circumstances and conditions which would ensure final victory for Islam. The answer is that God, being the Great Creator and All-Knowing, will not fail to bring about circumstances and conditions necessary for such a victory when the proper time for it arrived.

1791. Important Words:

المثانى (the oft-repeated) is the plural of مثنى (*mathnan*) or مثناة (*mathnātun*) which is derived from ثنى. They say ثناه i.e. he doubled it or folded it or bent it. اثنى عليه means, he praised, eulogized or spoke well of him. ثنى (*thinan*) means, the repetition of a thing; doing it one time after another. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said لا ثنى فى الصدقة i.e. There shall be no repetition in the taking of poor-rate, viz. it shall not be taken twice in the same year. مثنى (*mathna*) means, two and two or two and two together. مثنى الايادى means, the repeating of a benefit or benefaction; or conferring it twice or thrice. المثانى signifies the first chapter of the Quran called the فاتحة because it is repeated in every *rak'at* of Prayer or because it contains praise of God. It also signifies the Quran altogether. المثانى also means, the verses of the Quran. مثانى الوادى means, the bends of the valley. مثانى الشيء means, the powers and capacities of a thing (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

According to many eminent authorities such as 'Umar, 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd, the words سبع من المثانى signify the opening chapter of the Quran, the فاتحة, because it is repeated and recited in every *rak'at* of Prayer. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that السبع المثانى is the opening chapter of the Quran. This chapter is also called ام القرآن (Mother of the Quran) and فاتحة الكتاب (the Opening of the Book). According to Zajjāj and Abū Ḥayyān, the opening chapter is called السبع المثانى because it contains the praises of God.

The remaining portion of the Quran which follows the opening chapter has been called القرآن العظيم i.e. the Great Quran. The name however, equally applies to the first chapter itself inasmuch as a portion of the Book may rightly be called the Book itself. In fact, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that the opening chapter of the Quran is also القرآن العظيم i.e. the Great Quran (Musnad v. 2, p. 448). The first chapter, in fact, constitutes an abridgment of the whole Quran. It may be called the Quran in miniature, all the contents of the Holy Book having been summarized and epitomized in it, while the remainder deals with the same subjects in detail.

89. [a]Stretch not thine eyes towards what We have bestowed on some classes of them to enjoy for a short time, and grieve not over them; and lower thy wing *of mercy* for the believers.1792

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيۡنَيۡكَ إِلٰى مَا مَتَّعۡنَا بِهٖٓ أَزۡوَاجًا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا تَحۡزَنۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَاخۡفِضۡ جَنَاحَكَ لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ۝٨٩

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[a] 20:132.

That the first chapter of the Quran comprises in itself vast subjects was, for the first time, explained and demonstrated by Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah. Never had any commentator laid such stress on this subject as did Aḥmad, and never before did any theologian elucidate this subject with such clarity.

In the preceding verses it was said that as the truth had been brought home to the Meccans, the Prophet should now turn his attention away from them and leave them to the judgement of God. In the present verse he is told that after having withdrawn himself from them he should now apply himself more and more to the exposition of the teachings of the Quran to the Muslims so that when the hour of their success arrived they might be ready to introduce in the world the new order promulgated by the Holy Book.

1792. Important Words:

تمدن (stretch) is derived from مد which means, he strained, extended or stretched a thing. مد نظره اليه means, he stretched his eyes towards it (Aqrab).

ازواجا (some classes) is the plural of زوج which means, any sort of thing; sort or species i.e. class; one of a pair or couple of things; a thing having with it a thing of the same kind; a woman's husband or a man's wife (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, *Stretch not thine eyes towards that what We have bestowed on some classes of them,* do not mean that the Holy Prophet is here bidden not to covet the worldly possession of disbelievers, for such an interpretation is not only inconsistent with his dignity and nobility of character but also is in conflict with the clauses that immediately follow, viz. *and grieve not over them and lower thy wing of mercy for the believers.* The real significance of these words is that the Holy Prophet has here been told not to grieve over the fact that disbelievers, instead of feeling grateful to God Who had bestowed riches and prosperity on them, had incurred His wrath on account of their wickedness and now all their glory and power was going to depart and they were about to be destroyed. In fact, it had very much grieved the Holy Prophet that the

90. And say, [a]'I am, indeed, a plain Warner.'[1793]

وَقُلۡ اِنِّیۡۤ اَنَا النَّذِیۡرُ الۡمُبِیۡنُ ۚ﴿۹۰﴾

91. Because We *have decided to* send down *punishment* on those who have formed themselves into groups *against thee*;[1794]

كَمَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَی الۡمُقۡتَسِمِیۡنَ ۙ﴿۹۱﴾

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[a] 22:50; 29:51; 51:51, 52; 67:27.

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disbelievers whom God had blessed with such prosperity were going to be destroyed for their disobedience. He had wished and prayed that they should have believed in him and thus have inherited the spiritual blessings promised to his followers. But instead of this they disobeyed God and defied His Prophet and therefore were going to be destroyed as God had informed the Holy Prophet in the words: *and the hour is sure to come* (v. 86). This naturally caused much grief to the Holy Prophet who has been here bidden not to grieve for the Meccans, for they had made themselves deserving of this fate, but to devote his merciful attention to the upbringing of the small community of believers and to look after their moral and spiritual welfare. Incidentally, this injunction also implied a veiled hint about the impending migration of the Holy Prophet and his followers to Medina; for it was not possible to train and bring up the small band of believers as pioneers of the new world order so long as they were in Mecca, where they had no freedom of action. The verse also hints that the Holy Prophet desired to delay and postpone his departure from Mecca out of a heartfelt desire to save the disbelievers, if possible. He is bidden here to wait no longer and prepare for departure.

The words, *Stretch not thine eyes towards what We have bestowed on some classes of them,* do not refer even to the Companions of the Holy Prophet, as suggested by some commentators, who assert that these words depict the mental condition of some of the Muslims at the time when they saw the caravans of the two Jewish tribes of Banū Quraiẓah and Banū Naḍīr laden with jewels, scents, etc. The fact that the whole *Sūrah* has been admitted by the consensus of scholarly opinion to have been revealed at Mecca, where there were no Jews, knocks the bottom out of this baseless insinuation.

1793. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here bidden to announce openly and publicly the impending destruction of the Meccans and leave no ambiguity about it.

1794. Important Words:

كما (because) is usually interpreted as "just as," but the more appropriate meaning here is "because." The word has been used in this sense in 2:152 and 8:6.

92. Who have pronounced the Quran to be *so many* lies.[1795]

الَّذِيْنَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْاٰنَ عِضِيْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

المقتسمين (those who have formed themselves into groups) is the plural of المقتسم which is derived from اقتسم which again is derived from قسم which means, he divided or distributed. اقتسموا المال بينهم means, they divided the property among themselves, each taking his respective share (Aqrab). The word اقتسم does not signify, as some have thought, the act of swearing.

Commentary:

This verse, when read along with the preceding one, means that Divine punishment was about to overtake the Meccans because they had left no stone unturned to bring the Holy Prophet and his followers to grief and had even gone so far as to apportion among themselves the task of persecuting them. Different groups of disbelievers had taken upon themselves different duties with regard to putting obstacles in the way of the Holy Prophet. Some had undertaken to prevent visitors from approaching him, others to tease him when he was engaged in worship, and yet others had assumed the duty of persecuting the poor Muslims in diverse ways. It is to these various unholy tasks which the enemies of the Holy Prophet had set themselves that the word المقتسمين (those who have formed themselves into groups) refers. Some commentators interpret the word المقتسمين as "those who divide the Quran into parts," accepting some and rejecting others, but the more correct rendering is the one given above. In any case it is against accepted Arabic idiom to interpret the word as "those who swear" even though some scholars have supported this interpretation. For a detailed discussion of this verse, see "Tafsīr-e-Kabīr" by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah.

1795. Important Words:

عضين (so many lies). عضون is the plural of عضة (*'iḍatun*) which is considered to be derived from both عضا يعضو and عضه يعضه. They say عضا الشاة i.e. he cut the sheep or goat into parts or portions. عضى القوم means, he divided the people into parts or sections. عضة means, he lied or enchanted or calumniated. عضة فلانا means, he reviled such a one or vilified him or accused him with false accusations; he calumniated him. العضة in which both derivations combine, means, a lie or falsehood; a calumny; an enchantment; a piece, part or portion of a thing; a party, sect or class of people (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word عضين as given under Important Words means, many lies or so many lies. This meaning of the word is more appropriate here and better suited to the context than the other meaning viz. "parts." Read with the previous verses, the sense of the present verse would be that the Holy Prophet should announce the approach of the threatened

93. So by thy Lord, We will, surely, question them all,[1796]

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ۝۹۳

94. Concerning that which they used to do.

عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝۹۴

95. So [a]declare openly that with which thou art commanded and turn aside from those who ascribe partners *to God*.[1797]

فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝۹۵

96. [b]We will, surely, suffice thee against those who mock:[1798]

اِنَّا كَفَيْنٰكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِءِيْنَ ۙ۝۹۶

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[a]5:68. [b]2:138.

punishment to those people who had divided among themselves the unenviable task of persecuting him and his followers and had declared the Quran to be a bundle of lies. This interpretation disposes of the difficulties incidental to other interpretations of these verses.

1796. Commentary:

The words, *We will surely question them all,* mean, "We shall call to account all these people for their wicked deeds ."

1797. Important Words:

فاصدع (so declare openly). اصدع is derived from صدع. They say صدعه i.e. he clave, split or cracked it. صدع الفلاة means, he traversed or crossed the desert as though he clove it. صدعت الشیء means, I made the thing distinct or plain or clear. صدع بالحق means, he spoke the truth openly or aloud. فاصدع بماتؤمر therefore means: (1) cleave thou, or divide thou (their congregation) with that wherewith thou art charged; (2) distinguish thou therewith between the truth and falsehood; (3) reveal thou or make manifest that with which thou art charged and fear not anyone; or utter thou openly or aloud that with which thou art charged; or (4) order thou or decide thou according to that with which thou art charged, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse signifies that (1) when God's decision concerning the punishment of the Meccans and the success of the Faithful has been revealed, the Holy Prophet should announce it openly and desist from further reasoning with the disbelievers; (2) the Holy Prophet should now begin to decide all questions in accordance with the ordinances laid down by Islam and thus should help to introduce the new world order. Taken in this sense, the verse will be found to imply a prophecy regarding the coming migration to Medina of the Holy Prophet.

1798. Commentary:

The threatened punishment

97. Who set up another God with Allah, but soon shall they come to know.

الَّذِيْنَ يَجْعَلُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾

98. And, indeed, [a]We know that thy bosom becomes straitened because of what they say.[1799]

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ يَضِيْقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ﴿۹۸﴾

99. But [b]glorify thy Lord praising Him, and be of those who prostrate themselves *before Him*.[1800]

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ۙ﴿۹۹﴾

100. And continue worshipping thy Lord, till death comes to thee.[1801]

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَكَ الْيَقِيْنُ ﴿۱۰۰﴾ ع

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[a]6:34; 11:13. [b]20:131; 50:40; 110:4.

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overtook the Quraish after the migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina in the form of defeats on the fields of battle and other humiliations. In the case of individuals also punishment overtook the leaders of disbelief in diverse ways (Kathīr, under v. 5).

1799. Commentary:

The verse does not mean that the Holy Prophet was grieved because the disbelievers mocked at him but because they associated other gods with God, as referred to in the preceding verse. His grief was due to his jealous love for God, on the one hand, and to his sincere solicitude for his people, on the other, because he knew that by rejecting him they were incurring the displeasure of God and courting their own destruction.

1800. Commentary:

The verse means to say that inasmuch as the main purpose of the Holy Prophet's advent, viz. the establishment of the Unity of God, was now going to be fulfilled, he should in joyous thanksgiving extol the praise of God and bow down to Him in devoted prostration. The verse also hints that the Holy Prophet should now busy himself all the more in the moral and spiritual training of the Faithful and thus provide practical means of establishing the glory of God. How in these few brief words God has so beautifully taken the burden from the mind of His Prophet!

1801. Important Words:

يقين (death) is derived from يقن and means, removal of doubt; sure knowledge based on thinking and inference; certainty. يقين is of three kinds: علم اليقين and عين اليقين and حق اليقين. The word يقين also means, death (Aqrab & Lane). See also 2:5.

Commentary:

The verse means that now that the hour of victory was coming, the Holy Prophet should devote his time all the more to prayer and devotions without let or hindrance from his enemies who would be deprived of the power of interfering with his work.

The word يقين here signifies "death" but the more common meaning of this word i.e. "certainty" is also applicable here. In this sense, the word يقين would signify the time promised for the punishment of disbelievers and the triumph of truth. Taken in this sense the verse would mean that until that time comes the Holy Prophet and his followers should engage themselves in ever-increasing prayers and devotions in order to ensure its complete and speedy fulfilment.

CHAPTER 16

AN-NAḤL

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation

According to some commentators, the whole *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. But certain other authorities—Ibn ‘Abbās being one of them—make an exception of vv. 96, 97 and 98, which, according to them, were revealed at Medina. Some scholars, however, are of the opinion that the verses revealed at Medina are 127, 128 and 129 while according to others these verses are 111, 127 and 128; yet some others think that they are vv. 2, 3, and 4. But Qatādah holds quite the opposite view. According to him the whole *Sūrah* is Medinite with the exception of vv. 2, 3, and 4. Professor Nöldeke believes that the whole *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca with the exception of vv. 44, 112, 120, 121 and 126 and Weil strongly refutes Sale’s view that the last three verses belong to the Medinite period.

The Title

The *Sūrah* quite appropriately has been given the title of An-Naḥl (lit. the Bee) because by a reference to the natural instinct of the bee which has been termed وحی (revelation or inspiration) in the Quran, attention is drawn to the fact that the entire universe depends for its smooth and successful working on وحی (revelation) whether manifest or hidden, direct or indirect. This subject constitutes the pivot or basic theme of the *Sūrah*. Moreover, the subject of jihad has been introduced here as an important subject. As jihad was to become the target of attacks from all quarters, it is hinted that, like honey which is protected by the bee from undue interference by its God-given sting, the Quran which is a store-house of spiritual honey shall be protected by the use of force which Muslims will have to employ in self-defence.

Connection with the Previous *Sūrah*

The *Sūrah* is prefaced with no abbreviated letters. As the subject matter of a *Sūrah* is an amplification and expansion of the abbreviated letters placed at its beginning and is governed by them, the subject matter of a *Sūrah* which has no such abbreviated letters is, in fact, a continuation of the subject matter of the preceding *Sūrah* which has abbreviated letters at its beginning, and is thus subject to, and governed by, those abbreviated letters. As the present *Sūrah* has no abbreviated letters at its beginning, its subject matter will be considered as a continuation of the subject matter of the preceding *Sūrah* (Ḥijr) and will be taken as governed by the letters *Alif Lām Rā*, placed at the beginning of that *Sūrah*, only the method of approach and treatment of the subject being different. This *Sūrah,* like its predecessor, dwells upon the need and importance of Divine revelation and points out that the Word of God possesses an appeal and magnetism which no other book is found to possess, and the Quran being complete and perfect Divine revelation, the force of its appeal and magnetic power is unrivalled and unapproachable. The followers of such a matchless book, therefore, can never fail in their mission.

Another connection of this chapter with that preceding it is that towards the end of the preceding *Sūrah* disbelievers were warned that Divine punishment was about to overtake them. The warning was given in the words: *And the Hour is sure to come* (15:86) and *so by thy Lord We will surely question them all* (15:93). The present chapter warns disbelievers that the threatened punishment is about to come. The warning is couched in the words: *The decree of Allah is coming* (v. 2).

Subject Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the subject that the time has arrived for the fulfilment of the prophecies that were made by the Holy Prophet about the downfall of disbelievers. The question of the social status and position of the person to whom this Book has been revealed is immaterial. Does not the fact of the very humble origin of man and the great moral and spiritual heights to which he subsequently rises till he becomes the manifestation of God's great powers and attributes bring home to critics of the Prophet the absurdity of their objection? If in the physical world they can reconcile themselves to this phenomenon, why does it seem to them preposterous if in the spiritual realm God has bestowed upon a person, apparently of no worldly importance, great distinction; and why do they not consider that there must have been latent in him powers and faculties which had made him deserving of this Divine favour?

The *Sūrah* then proceeds to develop the theme of the need of Divine revelation and asks how the Benign and Merciful God Who has arranged to meet all the needs and requirements of man's travels and journeys in this life could have neglected to meet the needs of his last journey to the Eternal Goal. These requirements could be devised and met neither by man himself nor by the so-called gods of the idolaters. God the Almighty alone could reveal to man the right way which leads to Him and the means which render easy the journey of the spiritual wayfarer to the Eternal Abode. But if man out of his ignorance or perversity, by eschewing the straight path, creates for himself difficulties and impediments, he himself is to blame.

After this the *Sūrah* answers an oft-repeated question, viz. if Messengers are sent by God, how dare anyone flout or defy them? God is All-Powerful, so He should have seen to it that His Messengers are not disobeyed.

The answer to this question is embodied in the words, *And if He had enforced His will He would have guided you all* (v. 10), which suggest that as God has given man the freedom and choice to follow the right or the wrong course, He has also revealed to him guidance from time to time which helps him to avoid the wrong path and march to the destined goal. In addition to this logical answer, history is quoted to tell disbelievers how former Prophets were defied and rejected. Why, then, should the plea of the Almightiness of God be advanced in regard to the rejection of the Holy Prophet? Believers are then told that if they wish their kith and kin also to accept the Quran, they should see that their hearts are cleansed because without purity of heart it is impossible to find God. God does not compel anyone to accept the truth, for by compulsion the very purpose of the life after death would be defeated.

Then the *Sūrah* enters into a discussion of the life after death and it is stated that even in this world nations are resurrected and given a new life and it is with their "hijrah" (migration) that their resurrection begins. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet also would have to leave his native place and migrate to Medina because it was essential for the spiritual development of his followers that they should be separated from disbelievers. From this the conclusion is drawn that if it is so necessary for the spiritual progress of believers to undergo a "hijrah" in this world, how far more is it necessary for the permanent spiritual advancement of man that he should undergo a spiritual "hijrah," which is another name for death. After this "hijrah" the Faithful and the disbelievers begin to travel on separate paths; the disbelievers go to Hell and the Faithful bask in the sunshine of Divine grace and scale the heights of atonement with God. The subject that great and wholesome results will flow from the Prophet's Migration, is continued, viz. the disbelievers will be punished and believers will enjoy uninterrupted and uniform progress.

The *Sūrah* proceeds briefly to deal with the question why respite is granted to disbelievers and why they are not forced to accept the truth. This leads to a treatment of the objection that, if the Holy Prophet is a true Messenger of God, why is his teaching at variance with that of earlier Prophets. In answer to this objection it is stated that the real teaching which former Prophets gave to their people greatly differed from the current, adulterated and corrupt teachings attributed to them. In fact, a new Prophet comes only when the former teachings become corrupt and lose their title to Divine protection.

By citing the example of the bee, the *Sūrah* draws our attention to the fact that just as, guided by Divine inspiration, the bee collects its food from fruits and flowers and converts it into delicious and wholesome honey, it is in the fitness of things that Divine revelation should be given to man for his moral regeneration and spiritual development and proceeds to say that just as honey varies in quality, so are all men not of equal spiritual development. Like the different colours and flavours of honey, the revelations of various Prophets are not of the same pattern, nor do their followers equally profit by them. Then one more argument is given in favour of the need of Divine revelation. When with the passage of time people become separated from the era of a Prophet and vested interests grow up and become entrenched and privileges flow from father to son and all natural avenues of progress and advancement are closed upon the common man, God raises a new Prophet who wages a relentless war against this tyranny of man against man and the so-called leaders who enjoyed a monopoly of power and benefit are dethroned from their seats of authority and the common men who follow the new Prophet take their place. By their acceptance of the new Divine Message, these common men demonstrate that they were the real leaders and not those mountebanks who traded upon the superstition and fear of ignorant people. The chains of bondage are broken and man begins to breathe in an atmosphere of true freedom. Then it is that false notions of fancied superiority of presumptuous leaders die their natural death.

Another very serious consequence of separation from the era of a Prophet is that people take to idolatrous beliefs and practices which tend to impede their moral and spiritual progress. God cannot allow this state of affairs to continue for long. He sends a new Messenger who infuses a new life into a dead people.

Disbelievers are then warned that great changes which are decreed to be brought about by means of the Quran would take place very soon. The time cries for a change and the New Message possesses all the essential elements and ingredients of a perfect teaching. The followers of this New Teaching will succeed and all power and dominion will pass into their hands. A veritable war will be waged against disbelief and its leaders will be destroyed.

Towards the end of the *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is told that the sphere and scope of his preaching would now widen and would embrace in its orbit Christians and Jews. This would excite a new opposition and Muslims would suffer persecution from all quarters; but the divine cause of Islam would continue to grow and prosper amid opposition and persecution and its enemies would meet with a terrible fate.

اٰیاتہا ۱۲۹ سُوۡرَۃُ النَّحۡلِ مَکِّیَّۃٌ ۱۶ رکوعاتہا ۱۶

(AN-NAḤL)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.1802

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۝۱

2. [b]The decree of Allah is coming, so seek ye not to hasten it. Holy is He, and exalted above all that which they associate *with Him*.1803

اَتٰۤی اَمۡرُ اللّٰہِ فَلَا تَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡہُ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَہٗ
وَ تَعٰلٰی عَمَّا یُشۡرِکُوۡنَ ۝۲

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[a] See 1:1. [b] 5:53.

1802. Commentary:

See under 1:1.

1803. Commentary:

The word 'decree' may refer either (1) to the punishment with which disbelievers were threatened in the previous chapter in the words, *the hour is sure to come* (15:86), or (2) to the promise contained in the words, *lower thy wing of mercy for the believers* (15:89). The words, *the decree of Allah is coming*, mean to say (1) that the time of punishment for disbelievers or (2) the time of the ushering in of the new order, has arrived.

The words, *so seek ye not to hasten it*, refer to both the aforesaid claims: (1) Disbelievers are told not to be in a hurry to demand punishment, for the time of punishment had already drawn near. (2) Believers are told not to be impatient for the new order which is already at their very doors.

At the end of the previous *Sūrah*, the Holy Prophet and the believers were asked to shun disbelievers and give up further reasoning with them (15:86), and confine themselves to the glorification of God (15:99). Now by the words, *Holy is He*, it is announced that the time has come when the Sanctity and Holiness of God will be established. The Prophet possesses no material resources and has no means while disbelievers possess all sorts of means and resources. So the fact that the Prophet, notwithstanding his weakness and resourcelessness, will have power and dominion over his enemies will constitute clear evidence of the Holiness of God.

The words, *The decree of Allah is coming*, fulfil the prophecy of punishment implied in the words, *the hour is sure to come* (15:86), while the words, *Holy is He*, fulfil the prophecy embodied in the words, *glorify thy Lord praising Him* (15:99). This beautiful order and continuity of themes disposes of the ignorant criticism that there is no order or arrangement in the Quran.

The words, *Exalted above all that which they associate with Him*,

3. He sends down the angels with revelation by His command on whomsoever of His servants He pleases *saying,* 'Warn *people* that there is no God but I, so take Me *alone* for your Protector.'[1804]

يُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ بِالرُّوْحِ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى
مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖٓ اَنْ اَنْذِرُوْٓا اَنَّهٗ
لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاتَّقُوْنِ ③

signify that the associate-gods of disbelievers can never frustrate God's plans or interfere with His decrees and decisions.

This loud proclamation of the Unity of God and His freedom from associates or partners constitutes a very cogent proof of the Divine source of the Quran. False claimants always seek to form a powerful party of their supporters, and if they fail to do so, attribute the failure of their mission to this fact. But the True and All-Powerful God proclaims His Oneness as well as His independence of all partisans, associates or supporters.

1804. Important Words:

الروح (revelation) is derived from راح which means, it became cool and pleasant; he was brisk, lively, active, prompt or quick. روح means, soul or spirit; Divine revelation or inspiration; the Quran; angel; joy and happiness; mercy (Lane). See also 4:172.

Commentary:

By الروح (revelation) is here meant the life-giving Word of God. It is also used to denote a Prophet's Message for its life-giving qualities. The words, *warn people,* suggest that 'revelation' here means the special revelation which is given to a Divine Messenger. It should be remembered that Divine revelation is generally of two kinds: (a) The revelation which concerns the recipient's own person. It does not require to be made known and published, though generally there is no special ban on giving it publicity. (b) The revelation which is meant for mankind at large. This latter kind of revelation must be given wide publicity and it amounts to a veritable sin to suppress it. This revelation is technically known as a Prophet's revelation. The words, *by His command,* signify:

(1) That angels can bring no revelation of their own accord but do so only at the command of God and carry only God's own word.

(2) That the revelation referred to here is the one which embodies Divine commands and prohibitions and constitutes the essence of the Divine Message.

(3) That the decree of God implied in the words اتی امر اللہ (the decree of Allah is coming) occurring in the preceding verse is general and is fulfilled in the case of every Prophet. In other words, the advent of every Prophet is attended by the punishment

4. [a]He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with *the requirements of* wisdom. Exalted is He above all that they associate *with Him.*[1805]

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ
تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ٤

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[a]3:192; 14:20; 15:86; 29:45; 39:6; 64:4.

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of disbelievers and the progress and advance of the cause of truth.

(4) That it is obligatory to believe in a Prophet inasmuch as the message he brings contains the 'commands of God'. Rejection of the Prophet thus amounts to a denial of God Himself.

The expression من عباده (of His servants) means the chosen servants of God and not all men, and contains a beautiful hint that prophethood is God's special gift and it is bestowed only upon His chosen servants. The recipients of this special Divine gift must be true servants of God. The expression also signifies that prophethood is bestowed upon only the devotees of the true God and not upon the devotees of false gods. History fails to record a single instance of a Prophet having risen from among the devotees of false gods.

It may be understood from the words, *on whomsoever of His servants He pleases*, that it is God's own prerogative to select a man for the exalted office of a Prophet.

The Arabic expression ينزل (*yunazzilu* —He sends down) is used to express a gradual sending down and is meant to signify that the word of God is revealed gradually and in pieces and is not sent down all at once and as one complete whole. This is essential because a new revelation is intended to replace the existing order by a new order which is based upon new Divine commands and prohibitions.

This replacement of the old order by a new one can only be possible if these commandments and prohibitions are given gradually and in stages so that people may be able to assimilate them and adopt them in their daily lives. All Divine Laws were revealed gradually and piecemeal and their revelation was spread over a long period of time. Christian critics of Islam conveniently forget this patent characteristic of the Quranic revelation when finding fault with it on the basis of its having been sent down to the Holy Prophet in stages. The objection that this gradual revelation of the Quran shows it to be the Prophet's own composition exposes only their own ignorance of the Divine Law in this respect.

The words, *So take Me alone for your protector,* contain the essence of all religious teaching. The teachings of different Prophets have differed in detail but they are one in proclaiming the Oneness of God because it forms the basis and kernel of all religious teaching.

1805. Commentary:

The expression بالحق (with the

5. [a]He has created man from a *mere* drop of fluid, but lo! he is an open disputer.[1806]

خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝

[a]18:38; 22:6; 23:13-14; 35:12; 36:78; 40:68.

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requirements of wisdom) may mean that heavens and earth have their allotted tasks in the spiritual regeneration of man so that both jointly produce the desired result. Or it may mean that God has created the heavens and the earth so that they may serve to turn man's attention to God, and he may see that nothing is perfect by itself except God. The heavens stand in need of the earth for the performance of their work, and likewise the earth is dependent on heavens and both are subject to the will of God. So the purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth is to demonstrate to man the fact that nothing is perfect in itself except God.

The words, *Exalted is He above all that they associate with Him*, mean to say that he who does not believe that the heavens and the earth have been created with a definite purpose will necessarily fall a victim to the sin of setting up equals with God. No wise man can say that God has created this universe without purpose. If it has been created by God, it must have a purpose. If it be supposed to have no purpose, it would mean that it has not been created by God but is self-existent, which is tantamount to saying that every atom in this universe is equal to God for it is deemed to be self-existent or co-existent with God.

Another meaning of the expression بالحق is that the matter of which the heavens and the earth were made was created by God and therefore He has the right of control and interference. The reference here is to the view wrongly held in some quarters that God is not the Creator of matter or of soul though He is the author of their combination. Read in this sense the verse would signify that God's creation of the heavens and the earth was not an arbitrary act of power but something He had every right to perform, being the Creator of the primordial matter of which they were made.

1806. Important Words:

نطفة (drop of fluid) is noun-infinitive from نطف. نطف الماء means, the water flowed little by little. نطفة means, the sperm of a man or [ovum of] a woman; clear water whether much or little; (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that after God had created the heavens and the earth according to a definite system of laws, He created man and sent down His revelation for his guidance. But notwithstanding the fact that after having created man from an apparently contemptible seed, God endowed him with highest faculties, yet he, instead of acting upon the

6. And [a]the cattle too He has created; you find in them warmth and *other* uses; and some of them you eat.[1807]

وَالْاَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۚ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ۝۶

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[a] 6:143; 23:22; 36:72-74; 40:80-81.

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guidance vouchsafed to him by God, begins to question His powers and prerogatives. Some men are so presumptuous as to say that God could not bring the universe into existence from non-existence and that it had come into existence by itself. Others say that God did not create matter, but has only arbitrarily subjected it to His control. Yet others object that God has no right to impose a law upon man and that man is a free agent and can frame a law for his own use. In this way these people begin to deny the favours of God and declare themselves independent of Him. The verse supplies an answer to all these objections.

The verse also implies the beautiful hint that while on the one hand man, in spite of being created from an apparently contemptible substance, begins to arrogate to himself such greatness as even to presume to dispute God's authority; on the other he refuses to admit that God Who created him from a mere sperm and endowed him with such noble qualities has the power to raise an apparently lowly and humble man to the rank of a Prophet.

The verse may also suggest that it certainly could not be the object of the creation of the universe that only a disobedient and sinful man should have come into being. God's purpose in creating the universe must have been quite different and much higher and nobler. If such is the case, then why should men wonder when there appears in the world a noble personage who fulfils the real object and purpose of God's creation?

The verse also implies a reply to an objection raised by the opponents of the Prophets. They look down upon them and regard them as contemptible persons unworthy of such distinction. The opponents of the Holy Prophet held similar views with regard to him, as is apparent from 43:32. The verse draws the attention of disbelievers to man's humble and lowly beginning to point the moral that when from such humble beginnings men can rise to great eminence and glory, why is it impossible that God should raise to spiritual eminence a man who appears contemptible and humble in their eyes?

1807. Commentary:

This verse contains a crushing reply to man's arrogance referred to in the previous verse. It purports to say that though he has been created by God, yet he claims to be independent of Him. As regards himself, however, he exercises control over things which he has not created and freely subjects

7. And in them there is beauty for you when you bring them home in the evening, and when you drive *them* forth to pasture in the morning.**1808**

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ ۝٧

them to his service. Nay, he does not even hesitate to take their life, asserting that, as he is superior to all creation, it is permissible for him to slaughter animals for his own use. If it is true that lower life can be sacrificed for the higher one and if it is permissible for man to exact service from animals, then with what justification can he object to God's rule over him or to the authority of His Messenger? Why does he cavil and carp when he sees in his own case the same law enforced which he himself enforces in the case of others?

The verse may have another interpretation. In the previous verse the objections of those who found fault with God for His sending down the angels *with His word upon whomsoever of His servants He pleases* were answered. Disbelievers objected to God's selection of a person of humble origin for His revelation. The answer given was that when God had bestowed His favours upon them, although they had been created from such humble and paltry matter as seminal fluid, they could not possibly object to His bestowing His favours upon a Prophet whom they regarded as humble.

1808. Commentary:

Another benefit which man derives from cattle is that their possession redounds to his glory. Man takes pride in the abundance of his material possessions in the form of buffaloes, cows, horses, camels, sheep, etc. It is strange that while in his own case he regards the possession of things of which he is not the creator as a source of legitimate pride and glory, in the case of God he thinks that after having brought him into existence He should have left him to himself, so that, instead of glorifying Him and extolling His praise, he should find fault with His works and become a source of mischief in the world. Why should man not think that God, Who is the Creator of all, would also like His creatures to become a source of beauty and glory for Him? i.e. to become possessed of high morals and reflect in their persons Divine attributes so as to bring home to doubters and disbelievers the nobility and dignity of God's servants.

It is noteworthy that cattle are spoken of as "being driven" to pasture in the morning, and "returning" (not "being driven") in the evening. The use of two different expressions viz. تریحون (you bring them home in the evening) and تسرحون (you drive them forth to pasture in the morning) points to the fact that the young ones of the cattle are left behind when they are driven to pasture in the morning, and therefore the return of the cattle

8. And [a]they carry your loads to a land which you could not reach except with great hardship to yourselves. Surely, your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful.[1809]

وَتَحۡمِلُ اَثۡقَالَکُمۡ اِلٰی بَلَدٍ لَّمۡ تَکُوۡنُوۡا
بٰلِغِیۡهِ اِلَّا بِشِقِّ الۡاَنۡفُسِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّکُمۡ
لَرَءُوۡفٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ۙ﴿۸﴾

9. And [b]*He has created* horses and mules and asses that you may ride them, and as *source of* beauty. And He will create what you do not *yet* know.[1810]

وَّالۡخَیۡلَ وَالۡبِغَالَ وَالۡحَمِیۡرَ لِتَرۡکَبُوۡهَا
وَزِیۡنَۃً ؕ وَیَخۡلُقُ مَا لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۹﴾

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[a]6:143; 36:73; 40:81. [b]36:73; 40:81; 43:13.

to their young in the evening is spontaneous without needing any driving. Also, contrary to the natural order, the coming home of cattle is here mentioned before their being driven to pasture in the morning. This is because there is more beauty and pride for the owner in a herd of cattle coming home in the evening well-fed, hale and strong, than when they go out to pasture weak and hungry in the morning with the added fear that all of them may not return home safe.

1809. Commentary:

When God has provided so many facilities for the physical journeys of man, how can He fail to provide similar facilities for his spiritual journey? To say that God is too exalted a Being to have such regard for the welfare of man as to provide for his spiritual needs is only a puerile pretext to deny Divine revelation. If God is Exalted, the verse seems to say, He is also Kind and Merciful to His creatures and therefore His solicitude for the spiritual wellbeing of man is not at all inconsistent with His Dignity and Majesty, and instead of detracting anything from His Glory, it rather enhances it. This Divine solicitude for man's welfare may metaphorically be called God's carrying man's burden for him.

The use of the word رءوف translated here as 'Compassionate' is intended to express that feeling of sympathy and love which one feels at seeing a person in trouble and distress. The verse means to say that as God is رءوف (Compassionate) He cannot bear to see man in distress.

1810. Commentary:

The word زینة (as a source of beauty) literally meaning ornament, is here used in the sense of splendour and pomp. This meaning is in keeping with the significance of the words, *that you ride them*, thus hinting that their beauty lies in their being used as a means of conveyance. The animals mentioned in this verse are those that are used in warfare and serve to show the power and might of a people in opposition to the enemy.

In this and the preceding three verses, the Quran speaks of two kinds of things created for the good of man: (1) those that are of use to him in his private life; (2) those that serve his political ends. These things have been created to serve the following six purposes; (a) to protect man from the inclemency of weather; (b) to provide him with food; (c) to bring him honour and glory; (d) to carry his burdens; (e) to be used as a means of personal conveyance; and (f) to serve as a source of strength and power for him.

The verse purports to say that when God has taken so much care to provide for the above six physical and material needs of man, the idea cannot be entertained for a single moment that He should have neglected to make a similar provision for his spiritual needs. The verse also hints that although man exacts work from other creatures in spite of the fact that he is not their creator, he denies God (Who does not derive any benefit from him) the right to reform and guide him to a stage where he should constitute an evidence of His Holiness and Sanctity and a means of His glorification.

The expression, *And He will create what you do not yet know*, embodies a prophecy that God will bring into existence new means of conveyance which were yet unknown to man. This prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled by the discovery of comfortable and ever-increasing means of conveyance such as railway trains, steamships, motor cars, aeroplanes, etc. God only knows what new means of conveyance are yet to be discovered by man.

As against the six physical objects enumerated above, the six spiritual characteristics that the word of God must possess are the following:

(1) It should protect man from the evil effects of heat and cold, i.e. it should guard him against extremes in everything. Absence of the love of God may be called cold in religious terminology and abusing or persecuting in the name of religion those who differ from us in their views and compelling them to subscribe to our views against their will may represent heat. The word of God inspires man with His love on the one hand and on the other enjoins its followers to be tolerant towards those who hold views different from theirs.

(2) It should serve the purpose of spiritual food, i.e. it should contain all those elements which develop and strengthen the spiritual faculties of man. It should inculcate teachings which tend to suppress and subdue his evil inclinations and propensities and inspire him with spiritual strength and vigour.

(3) It should be a source of beauty and glory i.e. those who act upon it should appear beautiful and dignified in the eyes of others. Their compatriots should feel and admit that the word of God has worked a great revolution in their lives.

(4) It should bear man's burdens, i.e. it should make him realize his duties and responsibilities and, by freeing him from the shackles of superstitious customs and usages,

10. And upon Allah rests the *showing of the* right way, and there are ways which deviate *from the right course.* And [a]if He had *enforced* His will, He would have guided you all.[1811]

وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيْلِ وَمِنْهَا جَآئِرٌ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۝۱۰ ع ۱/۷

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[a] 6:150; 10:100; 11:119.

should enable him to achieve true liberty.

(5) It should serve as a means of conveyance, i.e. it should help man speedily to attain nearness to his Creator by understanding and realizing His attributes, and should save him from a long and fatiguing spiritual journey.

(6) It should impart vigour and strength to man, i.e. by acting upon it, its followers should lead a respectable and honourable life in both worlds, their organization should become strong, and they should win the esteem and regard of nations by living up to their ideals and teachings.

These are the six essential qualities which the word of God must possess and without which it forfeits the title of being called Divine.

1811. Important Words:

قصد (*qaṣdun*—right) is derived from قصد (*qaṣada*) which means, he betook himself to it; he aimed at or sought after it. قصد في الامر means, he pursued a right or direct course in the affair; he followed the middle and most just way in the affair; he kept within due bounds in the affair. قصد (*qaṣd*) therefore means, aim or course of a person or thing that is right; conforming or conformable to the just mean. They say, هو على قصد, i.e. he is following a right way or course (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, *And upon Allah rests the showing of the right way*, mean that God has made it incumbent upon Himself that He should show man the right way; or that God has taken upon Himself that He would show man the right way by following which he may attain to Him. This idea has also been expressed in 92:13 which says, *Verily it is for Us to guide*. The verse under comment means to say that God alone can show the way which is characterized by moderation and is free from excesses or extremes. Man, unaided by God, cannot devise such a way for himself.

This verse further tells us that, excepting those who enjoy special protection of God, every person has his prejudices and predilections. It is impossible for man to be quite free from bias or favouritism. Man-made laws therefore suffer from the defect that they tend to incline to one extreme or the other and deny some their just rights and give others more than their due. Hence a Law which has equal regard for the rights of all

R. 2.

11. [a]He it is Who sends down water for you from the clouds; out of it you have your drink, and there *grow* from it trees on which you pasture *your cattle*.**1812**

هُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَّكُمْ مِّنْهُ
شَرَابٌ وَّ مِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيْهِ تُسِيْمُوْنَ ⑪

and which gives everyone his due, neither more nor less, can be devised and promulgated by God alone. On the contrary, as man is a slave of his sentiments, laws made by him can have regard only for his own sentiments and susceptibilities and can reflect only his own feelings to the exclusion of the feelings of other people. Only that Law can have due regard for all sorts of temperaments and dispositions and conditions and circumstances which is devised by that Being Who has created all men and Who has full knowledge of their temperaments and circumstances. He alone can maintain the right balance between men of different sentiments and ideas.

It further appears from this verse that when God has arranged to satisfy the physical needs of man, it follows as a corollary that His word should satisfy his spiritual needs also.

The words, *And if He had enforced His will, He would have guided you all*, suggest that if God had not undertaken to provide guidance for mankind, the only other alternative for Him would have been to make human nature such that man could not pursue a wrong course or deviate from the right path. But God in His infallible wisdom has not chosen to do so. So when He gave man the freedom and the choice to follow the right or the wrong course, He should have also revealed to him His guidance from time to time and should have helped him to avoid the wrong path in his march to the destined goal.

1812. Commentary:

The Arabs were the first addressees of the Quran and in Arabia water is very scarce. So they have been told in this verse that water which is the source of all life and which brings out food and vegetation for them and their cattle is indeed a great gift of God. And, repeating the argument embodied in the preceding verse, the present verse goes on to say that when God has made ample provision for the physical needs of man, He could not have neglected to provide for his spiritual needs. Also that when man very gladly accepts and uses all the physical provisions made for him, why should he decline to make similar use of God's spiritual gifts?

The expression لَكُمْ (for you) in the verse points to the truth that the whole universe has been created for the service of man because he is the acme and end of all creation. So it is

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[a] 2:23; 6:100; 13:18; 16:66; 22:64

12. [a]Therewith He grows corn for you, and the olive and the date-palm, and the grapes, and all kinds of fruits. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect.[1813]

یُنۡۢبِتُ لَکُمۡ بِہِ الزَّرۡعَ وَ الزَّیۡتُوۡنَ
وَ النَّخِیۡلَ وَ الۡاَعۡنَابَ وَ مِنۡ کُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ
اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَۃً لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّتَفَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

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[a] 6:100; 13:5.

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really very strange that God should have omitted to fix a great object for man's creation or should have neglected to provide means for the fulfilment of that object. This subject has been further developed in the next verse.

1813. Commentary:

The preceding verse referred to rain which supplied man with drink and helped to grow such plants as feed animals which serve him. In this verse mention has been made of such plants as are used by man himself as food, staples, condiments or dessert. Thus it draws attention to the fact that not only animals but also plants have been created for man and are engaged in serving him.

The verse also points to the great truth that the power of making plants grow might be latent in the soil, but it does not come into play unless the soil receives water from heaven. Even so a man may possess most excellent faculties but he cannot develop them without the help of Divine revelation. To base man's spiritual development upon his intellect and natural powers alone is like saying that the earth can grow plants without the help of water. The truth is that just as land, however fertile and rich in soil, cannot grow anything without water, similarly human intellect cannot rise to its full spiritual stature without the help of Divine revelation.

The verse also meets a very popular question that may arise here: What new things does a Prophet bring and where is the need of any new Messenger when all the truths that he is supposed to teach are embedded in human nature? It says that the mere existence of a certain thing and its development and growth are two separate things. Just as the latent powers of the soil to grow vegetation remain undeveloped and its richness combined with the soundness of the seed that is thrown on it fails to produce anything without the help of water, similarly the latent and inherent powers and faculties of man fail to find their real development and growth without the help of Divine revelation.

Another point worthy of note in this verse is the order observed in the description of the advantages derived by man from animals and plants. In the case of animals mention was made first of those animals which are used as human food and next of those which serve other purposes (vv. 6, 9).

13. And [a]He has pressed into service for you the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; and the stars *too* have been pressed into service by His command. Surely, in that are Signs for a people who make use of *their* reason.[1814]

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۙ وَالشَّمْسَ
وَالْقَمَرَ ؕ وَالنُّجُوْمُ مُسَخَّرٰتٌۢ
بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
یَّعْقِلُوْنَ ۙ﴿۱۳﴾

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[a] 7:55; 13:3; 14:34; 35:14; 39:6.

Similarly, speaking of the plants mention has been made in the present verse, first of plants which serve as staple food and then of plants which serve only as condiments and dessert.

1814. Commentary:

In this verse mention has been made of another class of Divine blessings viz. the world of inorganic matter, particularly of those things such as the sun, the moon and the stars which exercise a powerful influence upon the mental development of man, either directly or indirectly through the medium of the animal and vegetable worlds. This is why, after animals and vegetables, mention is here made of inorganic and inanimate things which also help the physical and mental sustenance and development of man. Mention has also been made of night and day, because the benefits that man derives from the alternation of night and day are directly bound with the influences of the sun, the moon and the stars.

One more interesting point to note here is that whereas in the foregoing verses where animals and vegetables have been mentioned God has used the expression خلق (He has created), in the present verse where the sun, the moon and the stars have been mentioned, the expression سخر (He has pressed into service) has been used. This is done to signify that in the case of animals and vegetables which man uses for his benefit he has to put in some effort to derive that benefit from them; therefore in consideration of this element of the personal effort of man the expression خلق (He has created) has been used. But as the advantages he receives from the sun, the moon and the stars and from the alternation of day and night are completely gratuitous and are without any effort on man's part, the expression سخر (He has pressed into service) has been used which signifies service without remuneration. Similarly, the use of the expression يعقلون (who make use of their reason) in this verse as against the expression يتفكرون (who reflect) in the previous verse is also significant. The reason for using these two different expressions is that whereas the word فكر (reflection) means mental cogitation relating to matters which are near at hand, the word عقل

14. And *He has pressed into service* the things He has created for you in the earth, [a]varying in colours. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who take heed.[1815]

وَمَا ذَرَاَ لَكُمۡ فِي الۡاَرۡضِ مُخۡتَلِفًا اَلۡوَانُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ فِيۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

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[a] 13:5; 39:22.

(reason) signifies mental cogitation relating to things both near and far. As the influence of inorganic matter upon the life and development of man is a thing which requires deep study and close observation to understand, the expression, يعقلون has been used in this verse. But as the phenomena of the animal and vegetable worlds are matters of common observation and can be studied and understood even by men of ordinary intelligence, the expression يتفكرون has been used in the preceding verse.

1815. Commentary:

One of the most wonderful features of God's creation is that no two things or persons are exactly alike. But for this diversity there would have been indescribable confusion and chaos in the world. It would have been difficult to distinguish one thing from another or one person from another person. Similarly, there is such diversity in the dispositions and temperaments of men that it is beyond human power to devise a teaching that may equally suit all natures. No man has full knowledge of the diversity that exists in nature. God alone knows these differences and therefore He alone can give a teaching which can suit and benefit all men.

After animals, vegetables and the inorganic creation have been mentioned separately in the preceding two verses, the verse under comment proceeds to mention something common to all creation. A new topic about the difference in various colours is introduced in this verse. Colours, too, cast their influence upon man and work for his benefit. The effect of colour upon the human body and mind is only a recent discovery of science. It is a marvel of the Quran that it made clear reference to this effect more than thirteen centuries before its discovery by scientists. The verse points out that not only different objects in nature but also their distinctive hues and colours serve man's physical needs. It is no wonder then that God should have made similar or even greater and better provision for his spiritual needs.

The verse also suggests that just as the colours and properties of things are too many and too diverse to be enumerated, so are men's natures, dispositions and temperaments. It is beyond human understanding to comprehend this diversity of dispositions and natures which knows no limit or bound, much less to provide for the peculiar needs and requirements of each and every man.

15. And [a]He it is Who has subjected *to you* the sea that you may eat therefrom fresh flesh, and may take forth therefrom ornaments which you wear. And thou seest the ships ploughing through it, *that you may thereby journey* and that you may seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful.**1816**

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَاْكُلُوْا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا
طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ
وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا
مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ۝١٥

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[a] 35:13; 45:13.

This applies more particularly to the moral and spiritual needs of man and points to the necessity of guidance from God Who alone has full knowledge of this diversity and knows also how the requirements of every individual can be adequately met.

The verse fittingly closes with the expression لقوم يذكرون (for a people who take heed) because the problem of the diversity of men's natures and temperaments and the satisfaction of each man's peculiar needs is so complex that it calls for deep and categorical consideration. Each of the three expressions viz. يتفكرون and يعقلون and يذكرون which have been placed at the end of vv. 12th, 13th, and 14th respectively may be understood not only as especially appropriate to the theme of the particular verse in which it is used, but also as applicable to the general theme dealt with collectively in the three verses, their use in their particular places being determined by the degree of their importance. The word *reflection* has been used first because it constitutes the first means, and of all moral qualities it is the first to be awakened in the process of the moral reformation of man. From the habit of reflection grows understanding or *making the use of reason* at which stage man accomplishes his moral reformation. After this comes the third stage when temptations have been completely overcome and moral struggle ceases and man *takes heed* and is self-admonished and the doing of good works becomes a part of his nature.

1816. Important Words:

طريا (fresh) is active participle from طرى or طرو. They say طرى اللحم او طرو i.e. the flesh-meat was or became fresh, juicy or moist. طرى also means, it became new; was newly made or done; was renewed. طراه (*ṭarrā-hū*) means, he rendered it fresh or juicy. طرى الطيب means, he rendered perfume fragrant by admixtures. طرى البناء means, he plastered or coated the building with clay or mud. طرى therefore means fresh, juicy or moist; (Lane & Aqrab).

مواخر (ploughing) is the plural of ماخرة which is active participle from مخر. They say مخر السابح i.e. the swimmer clave the water with his arms in swimming. مخرت السفينة means, the ship clave the water with its stem and ran; clave the water with a noise; ran cleaving the water with a noise; faced the wind in her course; advanced and retired. The primary signification of مخر is the act of cleaving; and it also signifies the making of a noise or sound. ماخرة means, ships cleaving the water with their stems; or thrusting the water with their stems; or the sound of the running whereof, by means of the wind, is heard; or running; or advancing and retiring by means of the wind (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In the preceding verses mention was made of those things which grew on land or of which man could enjoy the benefit on land. In this verse, however, mention is made of water and things that grow therein. It may be noted that while speaking of the sea the same expression سخر (He has pressed into service) has been used in this verse as in the case of the night and day and heavenly bodies in v. 13, the expression بأمره (by His command) which occurs in that verse has been dropped in the present verse. This is because heavenly bodies and the alternation of night and day are beyond man's control and the benefits man derives from them are gratuitous and independent of any labour or effort on his part; therefore when mentioning them the expression, (by His command) has been used. But because for the benefits that man derives from the sea he has to make some effort in the making of boats, etc., this expression has been left out.

The sea is a most important source of material benefits to man. It is the great repository of water from which the sun supplies us with rain. It is also the highway for travel and commerce and an important source of food for man. It is quite obvious that God Who has made such vast provision for the physical needs of man could not have failed to make similar provision for his moral and spiritual needs.

The verse also suggests that although water is so essential for man and is present in such abundance in the sea it is unfit either for drinking or for irrigation purposes unless it is distilled by process of evaporation and is made usable. In the same way the mere existence of moral and spiritual truths in the world can be of no avail to man unless they are purified of all dross and are so assorted and presented as to suit his needs.

The subject of the uses and benefits of water for man began with 11th verse and is continued in the following verses. The theme is developed in all these verses that it is on water that men and animals have to depend for their food and that the sun, the moon, and the stars too have some sort of connection with water. The sun causes the water of the sea to evaporate, and then the same returns to us purified in the form of rainwater. This theme of the various uses of water leads us to a much nobler spiritual theme. It is that although we have water in the sea yet we cannot turn it into clouds. Similarly, though we possess reason and intellect, yet unless the water of

16. And [a]He has placed in the earth firm mountains lest it quake with you, and rivers and routes that you may take the right way.[1817]

وَاَلْقٰى فِى الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَاَنْهٰرًا وَّسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

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[a] 13:4; 21:32.

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revelation comes down from heaven our reasoning faculties alone can be of no avail to us to frame a perfect Law that may conduce to our moral and spiritual well-being.

1817. Important Words:

رواسى (firm mountains) is the plural of راسية which is derived from رسا. The expression رسا الجبل means, the mountain was firmly based, or was firm in its base upon the ground. رست السفينة means, the ship cast anchor, lay at anchor, or rested or became stationary upon the anchor. They say رسوت بين القوم i.e. I effected a reconciliation between the people. راس means, stationary, at rest, fixed, fast, firm, steady, steadfast or stable. جبال راسية means, firm or steadfast mountains. رواسى means, firm mountains (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7:188.

تميد بكم (quake with you). تميد is derived from ماد which means, (1) it (a thing) was or became in a state of violent motion or commotion; was or became violently agitated; (2) it turned or twisted about or became contorted and convulsed; (3) it (the mirage) was in a state of commotion; it quivered or trembled; (4) he (a man) was or became confounded, perplexed or amazed; (5) he became affected with a heaving of the stomach or a tendency to vomit and a giddiness in the head by reason of intoxication. or of voyaging upon the sea; (6) he inclined from side to side in walking; (7) he walked with an elegant and a proud and self-conceited gait with an affected inclination of his body from side to side; (8) he conferred or bestowed a benefit or benefits, favour or favours; (9) he trafficked as a merchant; and (10) it increased or grew. They say مادت به الارض i.e. the ground went round with him. ماد به البحر means, the sea affected him with a heaving of the stomach. The Quranic expression ان تميد بكم means, lest it should quake with you, be convulsed with you and go round with you and move you about violently (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

By using the expression القى (lit. he has cast) the present verse points to a great geographical truth. The verse purports to say that God has, as it were, scattered all over the earth, rivers, mountains and natural pathways which means that all these things are to be found in all parts of the earth and men derive great benefits from them. Recent geographical researches have substantiated the fact that mountains, rivers and natural pathways are to be found in every region of the earth. That the Quran should have proclaimed this truth at a time when large parts of the earth such as America and South and Central Africa, Australia and many other islands were yet unknown is a strong proof of its Divine source. Elsewhere the Quran has used the expression جعل (He made) for each of the three things namely, mountains (77:28) rivers (27:62) and routes (21:32). This shows that the Quran does not mean that these things have been planted on the earth from outside, as might be suggested by the expression القى (He has placed) but that they form part and parcel of it.

By the word سبل (routes) is here meant not the artificial roads constructed by human hands but natural pathways formed by mountain-passes, rivers and valleys which have served men as highways throughout the ages. It was due to these natural highways that contact between different regions of the earth became possible in the past and this is perhaps one reason why the three things have been mentioned together in this verse.

Mountains, rivers and natural highways have been mentioned in the verse under comment separately from other Divine blessings mentioned in the preceding verses because these natural objects are repositories of other Divine blessings. The mountains are natural reservoirs of water and vegetable wealth; the rivers constitute natural conduits for water without which it would not be available for the use of man throughout the year, and natural pathways make it possible for him to have access to these vast stores of Divine blessings.

The relation of this verse with the preceding verses is that it enumerates some more of the material blessings of God and thus reverts to the theme that God Who bestowed these material blessings upon man could not possibly have neglected to provide for his spiritual needs. Another implication of the verse is that by his efforts man can provide only for his temporary and local needs but for his general and permanent needs God alone can make adequate provision. It purports to say that just as the natural routes of travel are the means of contact and communication between different nations and countries, similarly in the spiritual realm there is need for teachings which should satisfy the spiritual needs of man not only for a specified time or a particular group of men but for different times and for men of diverse natures and temperaments to help them to rise from one stage to another in their spiritual development. These stages constitute landmarks in man's spiritual development and are marked by the appearance of Prophets. Man can hardly foresee what mental changes the human race is likely to develop in the course of the next few centuries, much less is it possible for him to devise a code which should serve him as a safe guide when these changes occur. Such a code of laws can be provided by God alone. This is why we observe in the history of human philosophy and science the

17. And, *other* marks *too; by them* and by the stars they follow the right direction.[1818]

وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ؕ وَبِالنَّجۡمِ هُمۡ يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾

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phenomenon of alternate progression and retrogression. But the history of religion reveals the important fact that spiritual teachings know no retrogression but only undergo a continuous process of progressive evolution.

The verse throws light on yet another scientific truth. Geology has established the fact that mountains have, to a great extent, secured the earth against earthquakes. Earthquakes were very frequent before mountains were created. To this great scientific truth the words ان تميد بكم (lest it quake with you) refer. Taking these words in the sense 'that it may go round with you', the verse would mean that God has made on the earth firm mountains, that it may go round with you. This shows that mountains are a help to the earth in moving steadily on its axis. The expression 'going round' also denotes continuation and permanence, and according to this meaning the sentence 'that it may go round with you' would mean that men will continue to live so long as the earth continues to move. The Quran spoke of the earth as 'moving round' long before it was discovered that it was not stationary. Similarly, the truth that mountains formed a great safeguard against earthquakes was first revealed to the world by the Quran at a time when it was unknown even to great scientists.

The verse also points to another geographical truth. Streams and rivers were followed by great pathways in the past, for the latter have much to do with the former. A study of the means of communications in the past shows that originally people settled along the banks of rivers, where they could easily get their necessaries of life. Thus rivers and streams were followed by tracks and ways which men used for their journeys. Moreover, rivers, streams and canals are themselves "ways", for they form the easiest and cheapest way of transporting commodities from one place to another.

1818. Commentary:

علاماة (other marks) being the object of the verb القى (He has placed) in the preceding verse, the present verse means to say that had the surface of the earth presented a uniform surface and had there been no ups and downs, no valleys, mountains or rivers, it would have become almost impossible for men to find their way from one place to another. The distinctive physical features of the earth's surface help men to know their way. Today these landmarks have proved to be of great help in air navigation. The stars also help wayfarers to find their way on land and sea.

The same is the case with the spiritual journey of man. Different parts of this journey present different characteristics which enable the spiritual wayfarer to know how much

18. Is He, then, Who creates like one who creates not? Will you not then take heed?[1819]

اَفَمَنْ يَّخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَّا يَخْلُقُ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

19. And [a]if you try to count the favours of Allah, you will not be able to number them. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.[1820]

وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٩﴾

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[a] 14:35.

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distance he has traversed in his journey towards his Eternal Abode and how much of it remains. On his way to the Eternal Abode the Prophets serve as guiding stars for him. Being guided and led by them he safely marches on to his spiritual goal. And, like the stars, the Prophets also are inter-related. Just as the knowledge of the position of one star enables the wayfarer to know the position of another, similarly one Prophet foretells the advent of the Prophet who is to come after him and so on. Thus belief in one Prophet helps man to know and recognize other Prophets and to advance in faith. Moses spoke of the Prophets who were to come after him and the latter foretold the advent of those who in turn were to follow them. Thus all the Prophets guided men to the Holy Prophet of Islam, the Sun and Centre of the spiritual firmament. This is why it is incumbent upon Muslims to believe in them all.

1819. Commentary:

To a superficial observer the form of the question embodied in this verse would seem to be rather queer. If a comparison of the relative powers of God and the pseudo-gods was intended by the question, the natural form would have been "Is he who does not create like Him Who creates"? But the fact is that the question does not refer to the relative powers of the True God and the false gods. It only continues the theme of the preceding verses in the present verse, viz. the need for Divine revelation. The pseudo-gods have the power to bestow on man neither material nor spiritual blessings. They can reveal no guidance. But the True God Who creates and bestows all physical and spiritual blessings on man certainly cannot be like the false gods of the idolaters who are quite unable to give any spiritual guidance. Being Almighty the True God can and will continue to reveal guidance to man. This sense of the verse is corroborated by the next verse. This is the significance of the comparison contained in this verse

1820. Commentary:

The present verse continues the theme of the previous one and points out that when physical blessings

20. And [a]Allah knows what you conceal and what you disclose.[1821]

وَاللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوۡنَ وَمَا تُعۡلِنُوۡنَ ۝٢٠

21. And [b]those on whom they call beside Allah create not anything, but they are themselves created.[1822]

وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ
لَا يَخۡلُقُوۡنَ شَيۡـًٔا وَّهُمۡ يُخۡلَقُوۡنَ ۝٢١ؕ

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[a]2:78; 27:26; 64:5. [b]7:192; 25:4.

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bestowed by God are so numerous as to be beyond the power of man to reckon, is it reasonable that He should not bestow upon man His spiritual blessings in the form of revealed guidance and, like false gods should behave as if He were deaf and dumb?

The verse ends with the mention of the Divine attributes of the Forgiving and Merciful. These two attributes could not function unless God had revealed His guidance to man. Forgiveness for the weak and reward to the virtuous were only possible when man had been given a teaching to follow.

1821. Commentary:

This verse proceeds to furnish another argument why the false gods of the idolaters cannot provide right guidance and why it is God alone Who can do so. The fact is that God alone knows all the inherent capacities and powers of man and knows also the doubts and misgivings which assail his mind. And only that Being Who is fully conversant with man's powers and capacities and his doubts and misgivings can give the teaching which can remove those doubts and satisfy the cravings of his soul.

Two conditions are the essential prerequisites of a right guidance for humanity. First, the Lawgiver must be fully conversant with all the depths of human nature. For, without such knowledge, it is not possible for Him to make proper provision for the full growth and development of all the physical and moral powers of man. Secondly, He must know all the thoughts of the human mind, for very often it happens that a man does not give expression to his real doubts for fear of social opprobrium. Only God Who knows the inner working of man's mind knows where his difficulty lies and He alone can answer the unexpressed question.

The Quran offers the best illustration of such a guidance. It furnishes guidance for the healthy development of all the powers of man, physical or moral, known or unknown. Similarly, it satisfies all those misgivings that arise in the heart of man, some of which have found expression in this age of science and enlightenment and which many men had not had the courage to utter for fear of incurring social opprobrium.

1822. Commentary:

The verse answers a possible

22. *They are* dead, not living; and they know not when they will be raised.[1823]

اَمۡوَاتٌ غَیۡرُ اَحۡیَآءٍ ۚ وَ مَا یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ۙ
اَیَّانَ یُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ ع

۲ ع ۱۲ ۸

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objection on the part of the idolaters to the argument contained in the preceding verses. They may say that their deities also possess the requisite knowledge and the power to reveal guidance, but they refrain from doing so only because man does not really need any such external guidance. The present verse answers this objection by saying that perfect knowledge of the unseen, the possession of which is indispensable for giving suitable guidance, can only be possessed by One Who has created man because only the Creator can know all the hidden powers of the things created and their working. But the false gods of the idolaters have not created anything at all. On the contrary, they themselves have been created. Therefore they are incapable of giving right guidance. It is really very surprising that in spite of the fact that the verse has so effectively demolished the claim made on behalf of false deities to the possession of knowledge of the unseen, there should still be found among Muslims people who believe that Jesus possessed knowledge of the unseen or that he had the power to create certain things.

1823. Commentary:

The verse furnishes yet another argument why pseudo-gods cannot provide true guidance for man, i.e. they are all dead. In order to be able to provide guidance they must be living because only the living can possibly know when and what defects might arise in human society that might require guidance for their removal.

It is a pity that, contrary to the teachings of the Quran, many Muslims still entertain the foolish belief that Jesus is alive in the heavens although the verse categorically says that all the false gods which men worshipped at the time the Quran was revealed were dead. So if Jesus was not dead, then he must be regarded as a true God and this is an unutterable blasphemy.

This and the preceding verse give four arguments to refute the alleged divinity of false deities: First, they cannot create anything and the possession of the power to create is an indispensable characteristic of God. Secondly, they are themselves created, and therefore are dependent on others and a being that is dependent on others cannot be God. Thirdly, they are dead and therefore are devoid of the power to do good or evil to any person and one who is devoid of such power cannot claim to be God. Fourthly, they do not know when they shall be raised to life. Lack of knowledge of the Day of Resurrection demolishes their title to Godhead.

R. 3.

23. [a]Your God is One God. And as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts are strangers *to truth*, and they are full of pride.**1824**

اِلٰهُكُمۡ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَالَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ مُّنۡكِرَةٌ وَّ هُمۡ مُّسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

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[a] 2:164; 5:74; 22:35; 37:5.

1824. Commentary:

The claim embodied in the words, *Your God is One God*, is no empty assertion nor have these words been placed here at random. The declaration is the natural conclusion of the arguments given in the preceding verses. In fact it is a characteristic of the Quran that it does not make a statement without supporting it by arguments which immediately precede or follow it. In the present case the arguments are contained in the preceding verses, which comprised two main themes. One was that all the objects in the universe form different links of one chain and are inter-related to and inter-dependent upon one another and that the end and object of the whole creation is man. His main food is the animals. These live upon plants and the latter depend for their life upon water which men use as drink. Water also feeds plants which in their turn feed men. The plants grow under the influence of the sun, the, moon and the stars and the influence of the light of the day and the darkness of the night.

Again the seas serve as great reservoirs of water. They supply man with food, and serve as great highways of communication. The water of the sea is purified by the process of evaporation and becomes fit for use. The rivers replenish the seas and keep the land fit for human habitation. This inter-relation and inter-dependence of things upon each other points inevitably to the fact that there must be only one Creator of them all. Plurality of creators necessarily implies imperfection of each, and only a Perfect Being can be our God.

The other theme of the preceding verses was that all objects of human worship were dead. So the Living God alone deserved to be the object of our worship and was the only true God.

The words, *those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts are strangers to truth and they are full of pride*, embody the answer to the implied question: viz. if the Unity of the Godhead is so obvious and indisputable, then why do men still deny it? The answer given is that this denial is founded on no reason but has its basis in the denial of life after death. Such denial naturally creates a sense of irresponsibility and lack of seriousness and sobriety on the part

24. Undoubtedly, [a]Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose. Surely, He loves not the proud.[1825]

لَاجَرَمَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوۡنَ وَمَا
يُعۡلِنُوۡنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الۡمُسۡتَكۡبِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

25. And when it is said to them, 'What *think ye of* that which your Lord has sent down?', [b]they say, '*They are mere* stories of the ancients,'[1826]

وَاِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ مَّاذَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ رَبُّكُمۡ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا
اَسَاطِيۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۙ ﴿۲۵﴾

See [a]16:20. [b]8:32; 68:16; 83:14.

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of disbelievers, leading them gradually to folly and ignorance and the inability even to recognize things which are quite obvious. Another result of the denial of life after death on the part of disbelievers is the growth of conceit and arrogance born of a sense of irresponsibility and of reckless refusal to admit the existence of things which, their reason tells them, are true.

Thus the clause speaks of two kinds of idolaters (1) the foolish and the ignorant; and (2) the proud and the conceited.

1825. Commentary:

The verse points out that God is One and Omniscient as proved in the preceding verses and that He will not leave disbelievers without punishing them for their evil deeds. But since He knows the overt actions as well as the inner motives of man, He will differentiate between those who defy Him through ignorance and those whose defiance of His authority is the result of their conceit and arrogance. The latter will deserve and receive a severer punishment than the former.

1826. Commentary:

The verse reverts to the original theme and says that when deniers of the Unity of God and Resurrection listen to arguments in support of these doctrines, instead of giving them proper consideration they make light of them by saying that these arguments are a mere repetition of the sayings of the ancients. By such remarks they seek to divert the attention of their followers from the truth. This is a common device of the opponents of truth. They always assert that there is nothing new in the teachings of their Prophet, and think that this assertion alone constitutes a sufficient refutation of his claims. As a matter of fact, Prophets of God come to remind men of the old truths that the latter had forgotten. If the later Prophets had taught what had not been taught by their predecessors they would indeed be impostors. Of course, every Prophet presents old truths in a new garb and, if necessary, makes some additions or alterations as required by the circumstances and conditions of his age.

26. [a]That they may bear their burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection, and *also* a portion of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without knowledge. Behold! evil is that which they bear.[1827]

لِيَحْمِلُوْٓا اَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۙ
وَمِنْ اَوْزَارِ الَّذِيْنَ يُضِلُّوْنَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ
عِلْمٍ ۗ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ۝٢٦

٣ ع ٤ ٩

R. 4.

27. Those who were before them did *also* plan, but [b]Allah came upon their structure at the very foundations, so that the

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَاَتَى اللّٰهُ
بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِّنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ

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[a]29:14. [b]39:26; 59:3.

1827. Commentary:

The verse signifies that by such devices as those mentioned in the preceding verse the leaders of disbelief manage to deceive their followers and retain their support; but in this way they ruin their own future, because on the Day of Judgement they will not only be punished for their own misdeeds but also for the imposition and deception they practised upon their ignorant followers. The particle ل in the Arabic expression ليحملوا (that they may bear) signifies that the consequence of the deception that the leaders of disbelief practise upon their followers would be that they would not only be punished for their own misdeeds but also for the misdeeds of their misguided followers.

What are discarded by disbelievers as tales of the ancients are really prophecies by which opponents of the Holy Prophet are told that if they persist in their opposition to him they will meet with the same fate which befell the enemies of former Prophets. Now those who consider the accounts of the former peoples given in the Quran as so many tales and stories naturally will not ponder over them and not take warning from them, with the result that they will not be guided by them. On the contrary, they will increase in their evil ways and will consequently have to bear heavy burdens on the Day of Resurrection. The word كاملة (in full) may have two interpretations, i.e. (i) they will suffer only a partial punishment in this life, but in the life to come they will have full and complete punishment; (ii) they will undergo the *full* punishment of their crimes because, being disbelievers, they will not ask for forgiveness of their sins in the present life and therefore there will be no mitigation of their punishment in the next.

roof fell down upon them from above them; and the punishment came upon them from where they knew not.**1828**

28. Then on the Day of Resurrection He will disgrace them and will say, [a]"'Where are My 'partners' for whose sake you used to oppose *the Prophets?*" Those endowed with knowledge will say, 'This day disgrace and affliction will surely *fall* on the disbelievers,'**1829**

مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَاَتٰىهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيْهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ اَيْنَ
شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تُشَآقُّوْنَ فِيْهِمْ ؕ
قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اِنَّ الْخِزْيَ
الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوْٓءَ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ۙ

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[a] 28:63, 75.

1828. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that it was nothing new on the part of the leaders of disbelief in the time of the Holy Prophet to deceive their followers and thus to keep them ignorant of the true teachings of Islam. The same device was adopted by the opponents of former Prophets. But their machinations were never attended with success; rather they recoiled upon their authors.

The verse also implies an effective retort to the opponents of the Holy Prophet. They say that he merely repeats what was said by other Prophets before him. To this objection the verse retorts that the Holy Prophet's disbelievers, too, are only copying and imitating what was said and done by the opponents of previous Prophets. Only they have chosen the wrong side, and have imitated the party which met its ruin.

It was not an ordinary ruin which overtook the opponents of past Prophets. They were destroyed root and branch. The very foundations of the edifices they had erected and the walls and the roofs thereof tumbled down upon them, that is to say, neither the leaders nor their followers escaped. So the leaders of disbelief are warned that they should not be proud of their following, because when the time came for Divine punishment, all their power and influence would be of no avail to them and their whole organization with all its firmly founded institutions would fall to pieces. So it actually came to pass on the Fall of Mecca.

The verse also adds that Divine destruction always comes in forms and from quarters most unexpected. The expression "coming of God" means the coming of Divine punishment. See also 13:42.

1829. Commentary:

Sometimes man suffers material

29. [a]Those whom the angels cause to die while they are wronging their souls. [b]Then will they offer submission, *saying*, 'We used not to do any evil.' Nay, surely, Allah knows well what you used to do.**1830**

الَّذِيۡنَ تَتَوَفّٰٮهُمُ الۡمَلٰٓـئِكَةُ ظَالِمِىۡۤ
اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۖ فَاَلۡقَوُا السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعۡمَلُ
مِنۡ سُوۡٓءٍ ؕ بَلٰٓى اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ
تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

30. [c]So enter the gates of Hell, to abide therein. Evil indeed is

فَادۡخُلُوۡۤا اَبۡوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا ؕ

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[a]4:98; 8:51; 47:28. [b]16:88. [c]39:73; 40:77.

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loss or a calamity afflicts him but that loss or calamity does not bring disgrace or humiliation to him. At another time he suffers disgrace and humiliation but no loss. The verse means to say that when punishment overtakes the opponents of the Holy Prophet they would suffer both disgrace and the loss of their material possessions.

1830. Commentary:

The verse speaks of those disbelievers who spend their whole life in disbelief and opposition to the truth. By doing so they only harm themselves while all the time labouring under the misconception that they are injuring the cause of the Divine Messenger.

The words, *We used not to do any evil*, mean that disbelievers would not deny having worshipped the false gods because that would be too patent a fact to be denied but would deny only the baseness of their motives and would protest that what they did was actuated by good intentions and pure motives and that they worshipped their false gods as an aid to concentration on Divine attributes. The present verse gives the lie to this sense of injured innocence of disbelievers by saying that this exactly is the plea which is always advanced by idolaters when they find their position indefensible.

The words may also be understood to mean that disbelievers would say that they had tried their best to find out the truth and what they did they did under the impression that it was the right course to adopt.

The words, *Allah knows well what you used to do*, mean that the plea put forward by disbelievers is false and that if they had been really actuated by right motives, they would surely have been guided to the right path in accordance with God's promise contained in the words, *And as for those who strive in Our cause, We will surely guide them in Our ways* (29:70). So their plea of good intentions could not save them from Divine punishment.

the abode of the proud.[1831]

فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

31. And *when* it is said to the righteous, ‘What think ye of that which your Lord has revealed?’ They say, ‘The best.’ [a]For those who do good there is good in this world. And [b]the home of the Hereafter is even better. Excellent indeed is the abode of the righteous,[1832]

وَقِيْلَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَآ اَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ؕ
قَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا
حَسَنَةٌ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَلَنِعْمَ
دَارُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ ۙ

32. [c]Gardens of Eternity, which they will enter; through them flow

جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا

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[a]39:11. [b]6:33; 12:110. [c]9:72; 13:24; 35:34; 61:13; 98:9.

1831. Commentary:

The verse means to say that those proud people who know and understand truth but who on account of perverseness or pride do not submit to Divine Messengers and accept their message will receive a heavier punishment than those who err through carelessness or ignorance.

1832. Commentary:

V. 25 above stated what disbelievers thought of the revelation sent down to the Holy Prophet. The present verse gives the opinion of the Faithful regarding the Quran in the words, *They say, 'The best'.* It must be remembered that the Faithful gave this testimony in favour of the Quran at Mecca where they were being bitterly persecuted for believing in it. A testimony given under such circumstances is entitled to the greatest possible respect. The Faithful were asked what they had found in the Book worth believing for which they were undergoing so much persecution, and the reply they invariably gave was that they had found it to be the Ideal Book, i.e. all that was essential for a perfect code of laws to contain was found in it or that this Book exceeded all their expectations.

The words, *For those who do good*, signify that a change in one’s attitude and outlook brings about a corresponding change in one’s deeds and actions. Disbelievers looked upon the Quran as a mere collection of tales, therefore they disregarded its warnings and consequently became deprived of all good. But believers looked upon it as خیر viz. the Ideal Book, so they acted upon it and thus reaped a good reward in this world and خیر i.e. the ideal reward, in the life to come.

streams. They will have therein what they wish for. Thus does Allah reward the righteous,**1833**

الْاَنْهٰرُ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا يَشَآءُوْنَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
يَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۙ﴿٣٢﴾

33. Those whom the angels cause to die while they are pure. [a]They say: 'Peace be unto you! Enter Heaven because of what you used to do.'**1834**

الَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ طَيِّبِيْنَ ۙ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ۙ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. [b]What do they wait for except that the angels should come upon them or that the decree of thy Lord should come to pass? So did those who were before them. [c]Allah did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves.**1835**

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ
اَوْ يَاْتِيَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

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[a] 10:11; 13:25; 36:59; 39:74. [b] 2:211; 6:159; 7:54. [c] 9:70; 16:119; 29:41; 30:10.

1833. Commentary:

The words جنات عدن (Gardens of eternity) signify that the abode of the righteous will be خير i.e. ideal and perfect. It will necessarily be everlasting, for it is only the defective things that perish. For the meaning of جنات عدن see 9:72.

The clause, *through them flow streams*, should not be understood to mean that streams will flow through those gardens, for the mere flowing of streams might sometime prove a source of trouble. What is meant here is that the streams will be under the complete control of the Faithful.

The words, *they will have therein what they wish for*, mean that (1) they will be masters of those gardens and will enjoy perfect freedom and there will be none to rule over them; (2) they will be given whatever they may desire; i.e. their desires will become identified with God's will, so they will desire only those things which it will be the will of God to give to them.

1834. Commentary:

It may be noted here that whereas, as mentioned in verse 29, disbelievers will be the first to make overtures of submission at the appearance of the angels of death, in the case of the righteous it is the angels themselves who will receive them with the salutation of peace.

1835. Commentary:

The expressions, "the coming of

35. So the evil result of what they did befell them, and [a]that which they used to mock at encompassed them.[1836]

فَاَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝٣٥

R. 5.

36. [b]Those who set up equals *to God* say: ‘If Allah had *so* willed, we should not have worshipped anything beside Him, neither we nor our fathers, nor should we have forbidden anything without *command from* Him.’ So did those who were before them. [c]But are the Messengers responsible for anything except the plain delivery *of the Message*?[1837]

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَّحْنُ وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ۝٣٦

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[a]6:11; 21:42; 39:49; 45:34. [b]6:149; 43:21. [c]5:93,100; 24:55; 29:19; 36:18.

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angels" and "the coming of God", when used with reference to disbelievers, always denote the coming of Divine punishment. By "the coming of angels" is meant the destruction of individual disbelievers, and by "the coming of God" their national ruin. The expression, *the decree of thy Lord should come to pass*, refers to the latter kind of punishment. See also 2:211.

1836. Commentary:

The words, *So the evil result of what they did befell them*, point to the great truth that the punishment of an evil deed is no extraneous thing, but is the natural consequence of the deed itself and is also proportionate to it. The expression, *and that which they used to mock at encompassed them*, means that disbelievers themselves become the object of the charges of which they accuse the Prophets and their followers.

1837. Commentary:

In this verse a very common but very foolish objection of disbelievers has been mentioned, viz. if God had disapproved of their beliefs and actions, He should have weaned them by force from their idolatrous doctrines and deeds. Since He has not done so, it shows that He does not disapprove of them. Before proceeding to give a detailed answer in the next verse to this manifestly absurd contention, the Quran gives a general answer in this verse. The verse purports to say that if it had been the will of God to use force, His

37. And [a]We did raise among every people a Messenger, *preaching*: ‘Worship Allah and shun the Evil One.’ [b]Then among them were some whom Allah guided and among them were some who became deserving of ruin. [c]So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who treated *the Prophets* as liars![1838]

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا
اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
هَدَى اللّٰهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ
الضَّلٰلَةُ ؕ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

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[a]10:48; 13:8; 35:25. [b]7:31. [c]3:138; 6:12.

Prophets would have forced disbelievers to give up their idolatrous beliefs and evil practices. But not a single instance is on record of a Prophet having employed force for the propagation of his religion and for compelling people to believe in him.

1838. Commentary:

This verse supplies several answers to the objection of disbelievers mentioned in the previous verse. The first answer is that God had raised Prophets among different peoples at different times and every one of these Prophets had taught the Unity of God. If the contention of disbelievers that polytheism was permitted and countenanced by God had any basis in fact then one or other of these Prophets should have subscribed to this doctrine. But all the Prophets most vehemently denounced polytheism in every shape and form.

The second answer is implied in the words, *We did raise among every people a Messenger*, which mean that if God had chosen to employ force in the matter of faith, then there was no need for so many Prophets to come to convey to man the will of God. One Prophet would have sufficed through whom God would have guided to the right path those whom He desired. The long succession of Prophets who appeared among different peoples at different times to exhort them to live righteous lives constitutes a strong proof that man is created a free agent.

The third answer is contained in the injunction "shun the Evil One". If it were true that good and evil had been predetermined by God and man is only the victim of determinism, there is no sense in such an injunction, and in sending so many Prophets, for in that case every man’s course would have been predetermined. The fourth answer consists in the fact that at the appearance of every Prophet a certain number of people who before his advent are polytheists renounce their wrong doctrines and become believers in the Unity of God. In the

38. [a]If thou art solicitous of their guidance, then *know that* Allah surely guides not those who lead *others* astray. And for such there are no helpers.1839

اِنۡ تَحۡرِصۡ عَلٰى هُدٰٮهُمۡ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يُّضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ نّٰصِرِيۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

39. And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths, [b]that Allah will not raise up those who die. [c]Nay, *He will certainly raise them up*—a promise *He has made* binding on Himself, but most people know not.1840

وَاَقۡسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ جَهۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ ۙ لَا يَبۡعَثُ اللّٰهُ مَنۡ يَّمُوۡتُ ؕ بَلٰى وَعۡدًا عَلَيۡهِ حَقًّا وَّلٰـكِنَّ اَكۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ ﴿۳۹﴾

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[a]12:104; 28:57. [b]23:38; 45:25. [c]10:5; 21:105.

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event of man's actions having been predetermined, he could not possibly effect a change in his beliefs or actions. The fact that on the occasion of the advent of every Prophet a certain number of disbelievers join the ranks of believers is positive proof of the fact that man has been endowed with freewill and that he is the master of his own destiny.

Divine visitations that have invariably overtaken disbelievers in all ages constitute yet another very cogent proof that man has been created free and is not the object or victim of a predetermined fate because there is no sense or justification in punishment overtaking a person who is not free to act as he likes.

1839. Commentary:

In this verse the Holy Prophet and the Faithful are told that in spite of their intense desire all disbelievers would never believe because man is a free agent and because God does not compel anyone to adopt a definite course. Since He does not force anyone to disbelieve, He does not force anyone to believe either. Such compulsion would frustrate the very purpose of religion, viz. the attainment of inner purity. God has therefore decreed that He would not grant guidance to those who are engaged in misguiding others. Not only would He not force them to the true path but on the contrary He would deprive them of all sources of assistance.

The expression من يضل (who lead others astray) has been taken by some to mean "whom God adjudges as erring". Such a meaning would be in clear conflict with the sense of the preceding verse. The correct meaning is, "he who is engaged in misleading others". The subject of the verb يضل is not الله (Allah) but the word من (who) immediately preceding it.

1840. Commentary:

This verse mentions another device

40. *He will raise them up* that He may make clear to them that wherein they differed, and that those who disbelieved may know that they were liars.**1841**

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِىْ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ وَ لِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰذِبِيْنَ ۝٤٠

41. [a]Our word to a thing, when We will it, is only that We say to it, 'Be!', and it is.**1842**

اِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَىْءٍ اِذَآ اَرَدْنٰهُ اَنْ نَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ۝٤١ ع ١١

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[a]2:118; 3:48; 36:83; 40:69.

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of the leaders of disbelief to deceive their followers. Seeing the ground giving way from under their feet and their followers wavering, they, in order to reinforce their weak position, resort to affirming repeatedly on solemn oaths that they are in the right. They resort to this device to hearten their vacillating and wavering followers whose faith in them becomes undermined by strong and unanswerable arguments that they hear from their Prophet and believers about the untenability of their views.

1841. Commentary:

This verse gives the reason why there should be a life after death and a Day of Resurrection. In that life the veil would be lifted from all things and their reality would become manifest. If human life were limited to this world, then the truth of the Prophets and their teachings would ever remain a matter of controversy and the deniers of the Prophets would also forever remain deprived of guidance which is inconsistent with God's Dignity and Mercy because He has created man to attain His nearness. A life after death is therefore necessary that man may realize the truth in that life which he could not realize in this life.

Elsewhere in the Quran (verse 65 below) the same purpose of creating an infallible faith in the existence of God has been declared to be the object of the advent of Prophets and Divine Books. The fact is that in the present life such matters as pertain to belief can be explained by reason and argument only to those who honestly seek after truth. They cannot be so demonstrated and established as to be beyond doubt. This is possible only in the life after death. But when in the afterlife truth will become quite manifest there will be no merit in accepting it; such acceptance may only be helpful in exciting God's Mercy.

The clause, "that they were liars", confirms the above interpretation. Realization of the truth on the Day of Resurrection will be so complete that disbelievers will have to admit that they were foolish to deny Resurrection. Indeed, it would be a full and complete realization.

1842. Commentary:

The previous verse mentioned the

R. 6.

42. And [a]*as to* those who have left *their* homes for the sake of Allah after they had been wronged, We will surely give them a goodly abode in this world; and truly the reward of the Hereafter is greater; if they but knew—**1843**

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا
ظُلِمُوْا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ؕ
وَلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا
يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ ﴿٤٢﴾

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[a] 2:219; 4:101; 22:59.

purpose for which God has ordained a Day of Resurrection. Since disbelievers might regard such a day as an impossibility, the verse under comment draws their attention to God's great and unlimited powers. It points out how these great powers are being manifested on all sides. The reference is particularly to the prophecies made by God's Messengers which, being seemingly impossible of fulfilment, are fulfilled in due course. Such invincible evidence should be sufficient to convince disbelievers that it is certainly not beyond the power of God to bring about Resurrection.

The verb كُن (Be) does not mean that God gives the command to something already existing. It merely gives expression to a wish and means that when God so expresses a wish it finds its immediate objective fulfilled.

1843. Commentary:

In the previous verse we were told that when God wills a thing, it comes into being without fail. The verse under comment gives a proof of this Quranic claim. It says that the Faithful were a small and weak community. They had been so oppressed by disbelievers that they had to flee from their homes. But God willed, and He expressed His wish, that these persecuted people should be accorded an honourable position in the world, and so it came to pass. This proves that when God wills a thing, it comes into being without fail.

The expression فِي اللّٰه (lit. in Allah) may have several interpretations: (1) It means, for the sake of Allah. The Faithful left their homes for the sake of Allah and for no material gains. (2) It may mean, فِي دِينِ اللّٰه i.e. for the sake of God's religion—for the sake of the free and unfettered exercise of religion. The early Muslims left Mecca for a place where they could freely discharge their religious rites. (3) It may mean, in Allah. In this sense the expression would signify that early Muslims had become so completely lost in Allah that they gave up their homes and kith and kin for His sake. Their departure from Mecca was thus tantamount to the departure of God Himself from that city.

Muslims left their homes for the

43. [a]Those who are steadfast and put their trust in their Lord.**1844**

الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ۝٤٣

44. [b]And We sent not *as Messengers* before thee except men to whom We sent revelation, so ask those who possess the Reminder, if you know not.**1845**

وَمَاۤ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْۤ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْـَٔلُوْۤا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٤٤

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[a]29:60. [b]12:110; 21:8.

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sake of God and God promised them a goodly abode wherever they went. History amply testifies to the truth of this statement. The great results which followed the flight of Muslims to Medina are too well known. Dwellers of the desert and drivers of camels came to rule over vast empires. But what they got in this world was not the full recompense of their noble deeds. They will get their full reward in the life after death. The fact that the first part of the prophecy met with a wonderful fulfilment constitutes an infallible proof of the fact that the second part would also be fulfilled, incidentally providing an irrefutable proof of the inevitability of Resurrection.

1844. Commentary:

This verse develops further the theme of the previous verse. It purports to say that the people to whom the rewards mentioned in the previous verse have been promised were of such strong and noble character that they remained steadfast under very bitter persecution. They had to leave their homes and hearths and fly to a foreign place for refuge but never wavered in their loyalty to their Faith. The presence of such fine qualities in a people is sure to draw the mercy of God upon them.

1845. Commentary:

Disbelievers laboured under the misconception that the Holy Prophet was an ordinary man like themselves, so there was little to fear from his rejection. The present verse warns them that all the previous Prophets were also ordinary mortals but they succeeded in their mission and their opponents met with complete discomfiture and destruction. So they too would invite their ruin if they rejected him.

The words, *So ask those who possess the Reminder*, contain a sound rebuke to the Meccan disbelievers. They took pride in the fact that they were the descendants of great Prophets, Abraham and Ishmael, and were well acquainted with their history. They are here told that they seem to have forgotten the history of their ancestors of whom they are so proud. They should consult some other people who happen to know and thus realize that

45. [a]*We sent Our Messengers* with clear Signs and Scriptures. And [b]We have sent down to thee the Reminder that thou mayest explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them, and that they may reflect.**1846**

بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ
لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾ ع

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[a]35:26. [b]3:59; 15:7, 10; 20:100.

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it is not safe to defy God's Prophets.

Taking ذکر in the sense to remember, the words اهل الذکر would mean, those who remember, and the expression, *ask those who* possess *the Reminder*, would mean that if the disbelievers of Mecca have forgotten the history of their forefathers they should learn it from Muslims who are اهل الذکر, i.e. who possess and remember that history. The taunt must have cut to the quick the Meccan idolaters who were so proud of their ancestry.

The words, نوحی الیهم (to whom We sent revelation), point out that the honour and greatness which the Prophets had acquired had their basis not in material resources or numbers, but were due to the revelations they received from God.

The verse also suggests an answer to the misgivings of disbelievers who asked how the Holy Prophet, a helpless man, could bring political power and glory to his followers. They are told that all the previous Prophets were as helpless as he, yet they were successful in their mission and gained power and greatness.

1846. Important Words:

The word الذکر translated as Reminder among other things means: (1) remembrance, the presence of a thing in the mind so that it is never forgotten; (2) the praise or glorification of God; (3) eminence, honour: (4) a book containing an exposition of religion and an institution of religious laws; (5) strong and firm saying (Lane). See also 2:41, 153, 201; 6:69; 12:105 & 15:7.

Commentary:

The word applies to the Quran in all these different senses: (a) The Quran is a book which helps man to remember God; (b) it praises and glorifies God; (c) those who act upon its teachings get honour and eminence; (d) it contains an exposition of the religion of Islam; and (e) it is strong and firm in the sense that its teachings and the truths it inculcates admit of no doubt or objection. The verse develops the theme of the previous verse and says that the Prophets come with clear proofs and Divine Scriptures, that is to say they come with heavenly signs and Divine commands. In this lies the secret of their success.

The verse further points to a

46. [a]Do, then, those who devise evil plans feel secure that Allah will not make them sink into the land, or that the punishment will not come upon them from whence they do not know?[1847]

اَفَاَمِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنۡ يَّخۡسِفَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمُ الۡاَرۡضَ اَوۡ يَاۡتِيَهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ۙ۝۴۶

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[a]6:66; 17:69; 34:10; 67:17-18.

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distinction between the Holy Prophet and former Prophets. It says that while clear signs and Scriptures were given to former Prophets, the Holy Prophet has been given the Reminder, the most perfect of all Divine Books. So when the former Prophets succeeded in their mission by the help of their Scriptures, it is inconceivable that the Holy Prophet should fail when he has got the most perfect of all Divine Scriptures.

The expression لتبين للناس (that thou mayest explain to mankind) may mean two things: (1) That the Prophet has been given the most perfect Divine Book in order that he might preach its message to all the world. It is not intended for any one people or nation or for any particular age, but for all peoples and all ages. (2) Since such a perfect Book has been revealed to the Holy Prophet he could not possibly keep it a secret. The perfection of the Book demanded that he should invite the whole world to its great Message.

By adopting the form of address contained in the words "which has been sent down to them" the verse appeals to disbelievers to listen to the Divine Message which although revealed to the Holy Prophet is intended for all men. They should appreciate this token of Divine love and favour by accepting it and acting upon it. The words also imply that since the Quran is intended for all mankind it is the primary and paramount duty of Muslims to preach it to all the nations of the world. Unfortunately, Muslims have neglected this sacred duty to their own detriment.

The words, "that they may reflect", suggest that Divine revelation, among other things, possesses the characteristic of sharpening the intellect of men. The marvellous change that took place in the condition of the Arabs after they accepted the Quran bears eloquent testimony to the truth of this statement. Wild and half savage hordes of the desert became, within a few years, the teachers and leaders of the world in knowledge and culture.

1847. Commentary:

The verb يخسف when used with the preposition با means, to make something or someone sink or disappear in the earth. It is used metaphorically in the sense of causing a person or thing to be entirely forgotten. Disbelievers are here warned that if they persist in their rejection of the Holy Prophet, they will meet with such destruction that even their posterity will forget

47. Or that He will not seize them in their going to and fro so that they shall not be able to frustrate *God's plans*?[1848]

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ فِي تَقَلُّبِهِمْ فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

48. Or that He will not seize them by *a process of* gradual destruction? Your Lord is indeed Compassionate, Merciful.[1849]

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ عَلٰى تَخَوُّفٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

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them. How clearly fulfilled was the prophecy embodied in this verse about disbelievers of Mecca is writ large on the pages of history.

Every punishment that overtook disbelievers came to them from quarters from which they least expected it. This was particularly the case in the catastrophe which befell them after the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyyah. The Meccans suffered from the illusion that the terms of that treaty meant a great moral victory for them. But it proved to be the beginning of their end. The treaty laid down that any Meccan who became converted to Islam and went to Medina would be sent back to Mecca. The strict observance of this condition by the Holy Prophet proved a blessing in disguise for the cause of Islam. After the treaty it was not possible for those Meccans who became converted to Islam to go to Medina, nor could they remain at Mecca. They therefore established a settlement between Mecca and Medina, free from the control of the Medinite rule and beyond the reach of the Meccans. Their hostile activities against the enemies of their faith compelled Meccans to request the Holy Prophet to revoke that part of the treaty which prevented converts to Islam from going to Medina and settle there. The breach of the terms of the treaty by Meccans later on, however, led to the invasion and conquest of Mecca by the Holy Prophet. All these eventualities were entirely unexpected and came upon the Meccans as bolts from the blue.

1848. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the frequent journeying of disbelievers and their free and unrestricted movements in the land should not lead them to think that their might is invincible and that their glory will never depart. These very movements of theirs will result in the destruction of their political power. In fact, the Battle of Badr was the result of the Meccans having sent out an armed force to provide escort for the trade caravan which was returning from Syria and which was likely to have a clash with Muslims. The battle proved to be the beginning of destruction of the power of the Quraish of Mecca.

1849. Important Words:

تخوّف (process of gradual destruction)

49. Have they not seen that the shadows of everything which Allah has created shift from the right and from the left, prostrating themselves to Allah, while they are being humbled?[1850]

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
يَّتَفَيَّؤُا ظِلٰلُهٗ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَالشَّمَآئِلِ سُجَّدًا
لِّلّٰهِ وَهُمْ دٰخِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

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is derived from خاف which means, he feared, he was afraid. تخوفه means, he took by little and little from it or from its sides or he took from its extremities. They say تخوفنا السنة i.e. the year of drought took from us by little and little. تخوفنا حقي means, he diminished to me by little and little my right or due. The Quranic expression او ياخذهم على تخوف means, or are they secure from His destroying them by causing them to suffer loss (by little and little) in their bodies and their possessions or cattle, and their fruits, etc.? (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse mentions another form of the punishment that would overtake the disbelievers of Mecca, viz. the tribes and territories which formerly owed allegiance to them would gradually break off their alliance with them and would join Muslims. This happened immediately before the conquest of Mecca.

The verse may also mean that even before their final overthrow, the Meccans would be seized with a consuming fear of the growing power of Islam and its ultimate triumph. This fear of the fast-increasing power of Muslims unnerved disbelievers and led to loss of the will to resist on their part which eventually brought about their complete downfall.

Mention of the Divine attributes of "Compassionate" and "Merciful," after referring to different forms of punishment that were to overtake disbelievers looks rather strange. The fact that the verse refers to Divine punishments which overtook disbelievers gradually and in stages, thus affording them many opportunities to save themselves by accepting Islam justifies the placing of the words "Compassionate" and "Merciful" at its end. Or the expression, *Your Lord is indeed Compassionate, Merciful,* may apply to Muslims, suggesting that whereas God was punishing disbelievers for their rejecting His Prophet, He was Compassionate and Merciful to Muslims because they had accepted him.

1850. Commentary:

In this verse disbelievers are told to consider and reflect that everything is subject to decline. Nations rise and fall. Flourishing cities and prosperous towns fall into ruin. Governments change and powerful countries fall victim to decay and decline. The poor become rich and the wealthy are reduced to poverty. So does the shadow of everything after reaching a

50. And [a]whatever is in the heavens and whatever creature is in the earth submits *humbly* to

وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي
الْاَرْضِ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُمْ

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[a] 13:16; 22:19.

certain stage become contracted, signifying that its power, influence and glory are about to depart and that it is about to be reduced to a mere shadow of its former self. When such is the eternal law of nature, why then do the disbelievers not take a lesson from this natural phenomenon and realize that their shadow is decreasing and why do they not give up conceit and pride and accept the Prophet of God?

In the preceding verses reference was made to the various forms of Divine punishment. In this verse, however, disbelievers are told to think and ponder why their power is declining and that of the Holy Prophet increasing. Nothing in this world can go against the will of the Creator. Natural objects have long shadows when the sun is at their backs. From this natural phenomenon it is easily understandable that the shadows of those who have God at their back must also become long, hinting that their power and influence must grow. But just as shadows have no independent existence of their own and depend on the sun for their increase or decrease, similarly success and prosperity depend only on the sun of the grace of God. When God withdraws His grace from a people, their progress and prosperity depart. Disbelievers are warned that punishments mentioned above will result in the complete obliteration of their shadows while the shadow of the Holy Prophet will continue to expand and lengthen until it will spread and reach to Mecca. Such is the eternal law of God which is embodied in the present verse and which they have been invited to study and profit by.

It may be objected that it is to the East or to the West that shadows are shifted and not to the right or to the left as mentioned in this verse. The reason for this description lies in the fact that it is with reference to the Holy Prophet and the Meccans that the directions have been mentioned in this verse. In fact, the verse implies a reference to the Hijrah. The Prophet was to go to Medina, which lies in the North, and the Meccans were in Mecca, which is in the South. If a person standing at a place where the boundaries of Mecca and Medina meet should face the East, Mecca will be on his right and Medina on his left. 'The right', thus refers to Mecca and 'the left' to Medina. The use of the word اليمين (the right) in the singular and الشمائل (the left) in the plural signifies that the shadow of disbelievers, being limited, will decline and decrease and the Holy Prophet who will migrate to a town situated to the left will have many shadows i.e. his cause will advance and progress from many sides.

Allah, and the angels *too*, and they do not behave proudly.1851

لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ۝٥٠

51. They fear their Lord above them, and [a]do what they are commanded.1852

يَخَافُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَ يَفْعَلُوْنَ
مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ۝٥١

R. 7.

52. Allah has said, 'Take not *for worship* two gods. [b]There is only One God. So fear Me alone.'1853

وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اِلٰهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ ۚ اِنَّمَا
هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَاِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُوْنِ ۝٥٢

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[a] 66:7. [b] See 16:23.

1851. Commentary:

The verse admonishes disbelievers that when God has decreed that angels in the heavens and those that live and move on the earth should serve the cause of the Holy Prophet, all their efforts against him will prove futile. His shadow will increase and theirs will decrease.

1852. Commentary:

This verse describes the most prominent attribute of angels, viz. that they are mere instruments for the manifestation of the Divine will and, unlike men, have not been endowed with a free will. Incidentally the verse demolishes the popular notion about the two fallen angels in Babylon—Hārūt and Mārūt.

1853. Commentary:

The interdiction about the adoption of two gods in the first sentence of the verse does not imply that the adoption of more than two gods is permissible, for it is stated in the very next sentence that God is One. This form of speech has been used to lend emphasis to the statement and means that God is only One and not two, much less many.

Another implication of the verse is that all men, even polytheists and idolaters, believe that there is One Supreme God. They believe in other and lesser gods in the sense that they exercise local and restricted authority, e.g., some control rain, others control food, yet others diseases, etc. There are also gods presiding over the destinies of certain families and tribes. But the Quran most emphatically denies the division of the Godhead into two or three or more and the present verse lays the greatest stress on the Oneness of God and says that no one dare share Godhead with Him.

The verse may also be considered as a refutation of the belief held by the Magi that there are two gods, one of good and the other of evil. It purports to say that both good and evil consequences of actions proceed from one and the same God and that there is no other god beside Him.

A further implication of the verse is

53. And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth and [a]to Him is due obedience forever. Will you then fear any other than Allah?1854

وَلَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَلَهُ الدِّیۡنُ وَاصِبًا ؕ اَفَغَیۡرَ اللّٰهِ تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

54. And [b]whatever blessing you have, it is from Allah. And when

وَمَا بِكُمۡ مِّنۡ نِّعۡمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اِذَا

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[a]39:4. [b]4:80; 10:13, 23; 23:65; 30:34; 39:9.

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that when there is only one God, then He alone has the authority to make Laws and that He has sent down the Quran for the guidance of man.

Referring to the warnings given in the previous verse, the Quran declares here that when events predicted long before by the Prophet come to pass after his Migration from Mecca, it will establish the Oneness of God.

The verse also implies a comparison between the teachings of the Quran and those advocated by disbelievers and points out that man cannot do without the monotheistic teachings inculcated by the Quran. Polytheism tends to dissipate human attention and energies while monotheism gives him concentration, strength and peace of mind.

1854. Important Words:

واصبا (forever) is derived from وصب which means, it continued; was constant; was fixed, settled or firm. They say وصب لبن الناقة i.e. the milk of the camel continued or was constant. وصب علی الامر means, he kept, attended or applied himself constantly, perseveringly or assiduously to the thing and managed it or conducted it well. The Quranic expression, وله الدين واصبا means, to Him shall be rendered obedience perpetually or constantly, whether man be content with that which he is commanded to do or not, or whether it be easy for him or not; to Him shall be rendered obedience, even if it be attended by successive fatigue (Lane).

Commentary:

In this verse the argument in refutation of polytheism is continued. The verse means to say that if we study the working of the universe we would find a wonderful uniformity of system running through it. If there had been more gods than one, this uniformity would not have existed. Moreover, if there had been two gods one would have to be subordinate to the other to carry out the latter's orders. In that case his existence would have been superfluous. But if both of them had been of equal status, then each of them would have his own separate sphere of influence and control. In such an event, differences would certainly have arisen between the two. But both these suppositions are absurd. Hence there must be One God, the only Creator of the entire universe.

affliction befalls you, it is unto Him that you cry *for help.*[1855]	مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْـَٔرُوْنَ ۚ ﴿٥٤﴾
55. [a]Then, when He removes the affliction from you, behold! a party among you *begins to* attribute equals to their Lord.[1856]	ثُمَّ إِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ۙ ﴿٥٥﴾
56. [b]*With the result* that they deny that which We have bestowed upon them. Well, enjoy yourselves a little; but soon will you know.[1857]	لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ؕ فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۫ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾
57. And [c]they set apart *for the false deities* of which they know nothing a portion of that which	وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ نَصِيْبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ ؕ تَاللّٰهِ لَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ

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[a]10:13, 24; 29:66; 30:34; 39:9. [b]29:67; 30:35. [c]6:137.

1855. Commentary:

This verse refers to those signs and evidences in human nature which support the Unity of Godhead. Various blessings which man enjoys in life evidently all form parts of one common system. But foolish people attribute some of them to their false gods. When, however, they are overtaken by some sudden calamity they forget all these pseudo-gods and turn to the One True God. This proves that in their heart of hearts polytheists are never satisfied with their idolatrous beliefs.

1856. Commentary:

By using the words "their Lord" the verse makes an appeal to the inherent noble sense of jealousy of man about a thing which he considers his own. The verse seems to say to disbelievers that when every man feels jealous of what belongs to him, why do they not feel ashamed of setting up equals with God Who is their own Lord and Creator?

1857. Commentary:

The particle ل here expresses result or consequence. The verse means to say that the result of disbelievers' setting up equals with God is that they begin to deny the favours which they receive from Him. But so long as they continue to be ungrateful to God they cannot hope to win His everlasting Grace. The verse warns disbelievers that God, out of His Mercy, averts from them His punishment time and again but if they refuse to mend their ways He would reject their prayers and punish them.

We have bestowed on them. By Allah, you shall certainly be called to account for all that you have forged.[1858]

تَفۡتَرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۷﴾

58. And [a]they ascribe daughters to Allah—Holy is He!—while they *themselves* have what they desire.[1859]

وَ یَجۡعَلُوۡنَ لِلّٰہِ الۡبَنٰتِ سُبۡحٰنَہٗ ۙ وَ لَہُمۡ مَّا یَشۡتَہُوۡنَ ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a] 6:101; 37:153-154; 43:17; 52:40; 53:22.

1858. Commentary:

The verse means to say that idolaters allege that their gods or idols have bestowed upon them such and such things while the gods themselves have no knowledge of any such bestowal of their favours upon them. The words لما لا يعلمون (of which they know nothing) signify that idolaters who imagine they have received gifts from their gods and goddesses do not know who their gods are.

The verse constitutes one more powerful argument in refutation of polytheism. Very often polytheists and idolaters are found to indulge in abstruse philosophical and metaphysical arguments in support of polytheism which confuse men's minds. In this verse they are told that the possibility that a certain thing can exist and the fact that it actually exists are two vastly different things. Even admitting for the sake of argument that there can be more than one God, does this hypothetical possibility actually prove that a particular person who is believed by idolaters to be a god is really so? These abstruse philosophical discussions do not prove anything. The godhead of the pseudo-gods has to be proved by strong and cogent proofs. This is a line of argument which at once takes the ground from under the feet of idolaters. They cannot prove the godhead of any one of their many gods. A polytheist will always indulge in abstruse metaphysical discussion about polytheism, but will never be able to adduce one single solid argument to prove the godhead of any of his many gods. It is in pursuance of God's own plan that the lives of the pseudo-gods of the polytheists show that they were so weak and helpless that in view of their weakness and helplessness not even the most confirmed polytheist could dare say that they were gods.

1859. Commentary:

The verse does not imply that the offence of disbelievers lies in attributing to God daughters and not sons. In 19: 91, 92, it has been clearly mentioned how it displeases God when a son is attributed to Him. The present verse only points to the folly of disbelievers that they go against

59. And [a]when to one of them is conveyed the tidings of *the birth of* a female, his face darkens, while he suppresses *his* inward grief.

وَ اِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمۡ بِالۡاُنۡثٰی ظَلَّ وَجۡهُهٗ
مُسۡوَدًّا وَّ هُوَ کَظِیۡمٌ ۚ﴿۵۹﴾

60. He hides himself from the people because of the bad news he has had, 'Shall he keep it in spite of disgrace or bury it in the dust?' Verily, evil is that which they judge.1860

یَتَوَارٰی مِنَ الۡقَوۡمِ مِنۡ سُوۡٓءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهٖ ؕ
اَیُمۡسِکُهٗ عَلٰی هُوۡنٍ اَمۡ یَدُسُّهٗ فِی
التُّرَابِ ؕ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا یَحۡکُمُوۡنَ ﴿۶۰﴾

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[a] 43:18.

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their own accepted principles. The rejection of truth makes them impervious to this patent fact that they attribute daughters to God while they themselves feel humiliated at daughters being attributed to them. This shows how helpless human intellect, unaided by Divine revelation, is to understand even very easy and simple things, let alone difficult and complicated religious problems. A possible objection that the Quran wrongly assumes that polytheists regard daughters as a source of humiliation is answered in the next verse.

1860. Important Words:

هون (disgrace) is the infinitive noun from هان. They say هان الرجل i.e. the man was or became low, base, vile, contemptible, despicable; he became weak and at rest. هان عليه الامر means, the matter was easy and light to him. هون (*haun*) means, ease and dignity and هون (*hūn*) means, disgrace (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In this and the previous verse the Quran has strongly condemned the low conception of the Arabs of their womenfolk and the degraded position they accorded them in their society. The Quran has throughout upheld the honour of woman and has recognized her rights, and in this respect it stands unique among all the Scriptures of the world. It may incidentally be stated here that it is generally believed that the practice of burying daughters alive was common among all Arab tribes. History lends no support to this popular misconception. Had it been so the number of men over women would have greatly predominated in Arabia. But that was never the case. Nevertheless, the birth of a daughter was looked upon as a source of humiliation and embarrassment to the parents. But the foul practice of burying daughters alive was confined to a few tribes outside Mecca who had an exaggerated notion of their

61. The state of those who do not believe in the Hereafter is evil, [a]while Allah’s attribute is sublime and He is the Mighty, the Wise.[1861]

لِلَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ مَثَلُ
السَّوۡءِ ۚ وَلِلّٰهِ الۡمَثَلُ الۡاَعۡلٰى ؕ وَهُوَ
الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۶۱﴾ ع ۷ ۱۳

R. 8.

62. And [b]if Allah were to punish men for their wrongdoing, He would not leave thereon a living creature, but He gives them respite till an appointed term; and [c]when their term is come, they cannot remain behind a single hour, nor can they go ahead *of it.*[1862]

وَلَوۡ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلۡمِهِمۡ مَّا
تَرَكَ عَلَيۡهَا مِنۡ دَآبَّةٍ وَّلٰكِنۡ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمۡ
اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمۡ لَا
يَسۡتَاۡخِرُوۡنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسۡتَقۡدِمُوۡنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

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[a]30:28. [b]10:12; 18:59; 35:46. [c]7:35; 10:50.

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greatness, and even among those tribes only the wealthy few resorted to this barbarous practice.

1861. Commentary:

The verse sets forth clearly the main purport of the chapter, i.e. those who do not believe in the life after death can have no faith in the possibility of Divine revelation. They seek to arrogate to themselves the framing of laws for their guidance. But such attempts have always ended in failure while the "word" which comes from God, being free from all defects and imperfections and being possessed of all conceivable excellences, is a safe guide. This shows the need for Divine revelation.

The two attributes of "Mighty" and "Wise" point to the fact that true guidance can only come from God, for One possessed of might alone can implement all His promises and only the Wise One can find out what man really needs and only He can satisfy that need.

These attributes also point to the fact that there must be a life after death. Since God is Wise, all His acts must be based upon wisdom and if there be no life after death, this life ceases to possess any purpose or object, and this should cast a reflection on the wisdom of God. Similarly, complete manifestation of God’s might can take place only in the life after death, for in the event of such a manifestation taking place in this life, faith and virtue would cease to have weight or value.

1862. Commentary:

This verse furnishes an answer to a possible doubt arising from the preceding verse. The doubter would

63. And they attribute to Allah what they dislike *for themselves* and their tongues utter the lie that they will have the best *of* everything. Undoubtedly, theirs shall be the Fire, and *therein* shall they be abandoned.1863

وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ مَا يَكْرَهُوْنَ وَتَصِفُ
اَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ لَا
جَرَمَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَاَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُوْنَ ﴿۶۳﴾

64. By Allah, [a]We did send *Messengers* to the peoples before thee; [b]but Satan made their works appear beautiful to them. So he is their patron this

تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ
فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ
وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۶۴﴾

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[a] 6:43; 22:53. [b] 6:44; 8:49.

say, if Divine revelation is the only source of guidance, and teachings devised by man all lead to error, why then do disbelievers, in spite of their rejection of Divine guidance, not always come to grief in this life? On the contrary, many of them are seen to prosper, which fact shows that they are not altogether in the wrong. One answer implied in the verse is that if thieves, robbers and murderers do not always meet with immediate punishment and sometimes get respite, how can respite granted to rejecters of the Quran be adduced as a proof that it is not the revealed word of God? Another reason embodied in this verse as to why punishment is not always meted out to the guilty is that if all sins had been at once punished by God, the world would have come to an end and all life on earth would have become extinct. Man would have perished as a result of his sins and there would have been no purpose in the beasts, animals, birds etc., remaining alive after his destruction. Being created for man's use and benefit they would have perished with him. So God's wise plan in granting respite to evildoers and deferring their punishment provides yet another proof of the life after death when man's actions will meet with full and even-handed justice.

1863. Commentary:

The verse reverts to the subject of the previous verse in a different form and says that disbelievers are foolish to think that they can ever come to a happy end by attributing to God abominable things which they dislike for themselves, and that just as they consigned God to oblivion in this life, so would He abandon them in the next life to burn in the fire of Hell.

day, and they shall have a grievous punishment.[1864]

65. And We have not sent down to thee the Book except that thou mayest explain to them that concerning which they differ, and [a]as a guidance, and a mercy for a people who believe.[1865]

وَمَآ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ اِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ
الَّذِى اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِيۡهِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحۡمَةً
لِّقَوۡمٍ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۝٦٥

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[a] 6:158; 12:112; 16:90.

1864. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that the disbelievers of Mecca like disbelievers of former Prophets have been lulled by Satan into a false sense of security. Like their predecessors and prototypes, they labour under the delusion that they would not have to answer for their wrongdoings. They feel themselves to be secure while a terrible punishment is about to overtake them.

1865. Commentary:

The verse sets forth the existence of differences among the nations of the world as a reason for Divine revelation to be sent down to them because the Divine Word alone can resolve these differences. These differences also constitute a justification for the Quranic revelation. If men could only be convinced that the Quran was the revealed word of God, they would certainly give up their own views in its favour.

The verse also suggests that disbelievers cannot reasonably object to the advent of a new Prophet because a new Prophet comes only when the people cease to observe the teaching of the previous Prophet and deviate from the right path. So their deviation from the right path and their differences justify the appearance of a new Prophet.

The question may be asked, if, for instance, the Jews had remained loyal to the teachings of Moses, would the Holy Prophet not have come? The question is hypothetical. In any case differences and disagreements would have continued to exist in the world and consequently there would have always remained the need for a new Divine Messenger. But God has already provided an answer to the question in the words, *"Had there been in the earth angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should have certainly sent down to them from heaven an angel as a Messenger"* (17:96) i.e. if all men had become pure and holy like angels, there was no need for any Prophet to come. The word of God would then have descended directly upon every individual. But since angels have never lived on this earth nor has the world ceased to be a place of sin and iniquity, the Prophets also have not

66. And [a]Allah has sent down water from the sky, and has quickened therewith the earth after its death. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who would hear.**1866**

وَاللّٰهُ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحۡيَا بِهِ
الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰيَةً
لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّسۡمَعُوۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

ع ٨ ٥ ١٤

R. 9.

67. And [b]surely in the cattle *too* there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, from betwixt the faeces and the blood, milk pure *and* pleasant for those who drink *it*.**1867**

وَاِنَّ لَکُمۡ فِی الۡاَنۡعَامِ لَعِبۡرَةً ؕ نُسۡقِيۡکُمۡ
مِّمَّا فِیۡ بُطُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ فَرۡثٍ وَّدَمٍ
لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشّٰرِبِيۡنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

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[a]2:165; 13:18. [b]23:22.

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ceased to appear to bring about reconciliation between the sinful people and their Compassionate and Merciful Creator.

1866. Commentary:

By 'water' here is meant Divine revelation and the attention of disbelievers has been drawn to the fact that if Prophets have been appearing in the past to give life to the dead, why should the present generation not have their Prophet?

1867. Important Words:

سائغا (pleasant) is derived from ساغ. They say ساغ فی الحلق i.e. it (beverage) was easy and agreeable to swallow or it passed the faeces easily and agreeably. ساغ له ما فعل means, what he did was allowable to him. ساغت به الارض means, the ground or earth sank with him; or sank with him and swallowed him up or enclosed him. سائغ applied to beverage or wine and food, means, descending easily and agreeably down the throat or easy and agreeable to swallow; not choking (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word انعام translated as "cattle" includes the camel, the cow, the goat, the sheep, etc. All these are very useful animals. Their flesh and milk form the principal articles of man's food. They are also used as means of conveyance and for carrying loads. In short they are of great use to man in many ways.

While drawing attention to the great and manifold benefits that man derives from these animals, the verse uses the word عبرة which means, 'an indication or evidence whereby one passes from ignorance to knowledge'. The word seems to allude to some subtle process taking place inside the bellies of some of these animals by pondering over which one is led 'to

68. [a]And of the fruits of the date-palms and the grapes, whence you obtain intoxicating drink and wholesome food. Verily, in that is a Sign for a people who make use of *their* reason.[1868]

وَمِنۡ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيۡلِ وَالۡاَعۡنَابِ
تَتَّخِذُوۡنَ مِنۡهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزۡقًا حَسَنًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيۡ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۝۶۸

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[a] 13:5; 16:12; 23:20; 36:35.

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pass from ignorance to knowledge'. The subtle process is something like this. The cattle eat grass, herbage, leaves of trees, etc. Of this faecal matter is formed in their intestines in the course of digestion. Part of that faecal matter becomes converted into blood which supplies the nutrients to form sweet and wholesome milk. Intelligent and reverential study of this conversion of grass or leaves of trees into milk in the bellies of the animals leads to the inevitable conclusion that the natural propensities and inclinations of man cannot lead him to the right path unless they are controlled and regulated by some heavenly machine which is Divine revelation.

This verse affords one more evidence of the Divine origin of the Quran. The process the Quran has described of the formation of milk from faeces and blood was not known to man until very recent times. It was not known to the old commentators of the Quran. They have, therefore, greatly stumbled and erred in explaining this verse. For example, Zamakhshari, the well-known author of *Al-Kashshāf*, says that when food goes into the belly of an animal its lower portion forms the faeces, the middle portion milk and the upper part becomes turned into blood. The verse under comment, however, clearly, states that the matter of which milk is made passes through the forms of faeces and blood before it assumes the form of milk. This fact has been discovered by scientists only in recent times.

The verse does not mean that man cannot produce milk synthetically. What is here meant is that he cannot produce it in such quantity that it may become an article of food. This is only possible in the way mentioned in this verse. Synthetically prepared milk can no more be a substitute for natural milk than artificial showers of rain are for natural rain.

The verse also suggests that just as man can only corrupt food but cannot convert it into milk, even so can he only corrupt Divine teaching but it is not in his power to convert the defective laws devised by himself into eternal spiritual truths.

1868. Commentary:

The verse means to say that when things created by God remain in their natural and unadulterated form they

69. And thy Lord has inspired the bee, *saying*, 'Make thou houses in the hills and in the trees and in the trellises which they build.[1869]

وَاَوْحٰى رَبُّكَ اِلَى النَّحْلِ اَنِ اتَّخِذِىْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ۙ۝۶۹

constitute pure, wholesome and invigorating food. But when man interferes with their natural use he corrupts them. Similarly, as long as Divine teaching remains intact, it is a source of great spiritual benefit, but when man interferes with it, it loses its usefulness and becomes harmful. The verse also points out that all wise and thoughtful persons can easily understand that everything is best suited for the purpose which it has been designed by God to serve and that to use it for any other purpose is only to destroy its usefulness. Similarly, it is not given to man to devise spiritual teachings or to interfere with those revealed by God without spoiling them or destroying their usefulness.

1869. Commentary:

This verse gives a third example, which is clearer and more expressive than the previous two examples, of the need of Divine revelation. By وحی (inspiration or revelation), in this verse, is meant the natural instincts with which God has endowed all creatures. The verse contains the beautiful hint that the entire universe depends for its smooth and successful working on وحی whether manifest or hidden. In other words all things and creatures serve the purpose of their existence only by working according to their natural instincts and inborn faculties and aptitudes. The bee has been selected as a prominent example, because its wonderful organization and work impresses even a casual observer and is discernible by the naked eye. But the fact that, even the bee cannot improve upon its wonderful skill, work and organization shows that some other Being is the source and fountain-head of its skill and organization and that Being has imparted to it this skill, intelligence and knowledge.

The verse also draws attention to the fact that bees are of various kinds. Some make their hives in mountains, others make them in trees, and yet others make them in trellises. In the same way all men do not possess similar natural aptitudes and capabilities, neither are they of equal spiritual rank. Some rise high like lofty mountains while others are of comparatively lower spiritual status. Similarly, like the different colours, tastes and flavours of the honey produced by the bees, the revelations of various Prophets are also not of the same pattern. They differ in their quality and scope and the manner of their approach to the problems they have to deal with. The verse also implies that all great inventions have been due to وحی (Divine inspiration).

For the different kinds of وحی see 4:164; 5:112; 8:13; 16:69; 28:8 & 99:6.

70. Then eat of every *kind of* fruit, and follow the ways of thy Lord *that have been* made easy *for thee*.' There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therein is cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect.[1870]

ثُمَّ كُلِيْ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ فَاسْلُكِيْ سُبُلَ
رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا ؕ يَخْرُجُ مِنْۢ بُطُوْنِهَا
شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهٗ فِيْهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ ؕ
اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۷۰﴾

71. And Allah creates you, then He causes you to die; and [a]there

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۛ وَمِنْكُمْ

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[a] 22:6.

1870. Commentary:

The subject of the bee has been further elaborated in this verse. It says that God inspires the bee to collect its food from different fruits and flowers and then, by means of the mechanism provided in its body and by the methods revealed to it by God, it converts the collected food into honey. That honey possesses different colours and flavours but all its different varieties are highly useful for men. This fact suggests that revelation has continued to descend on Prophets at different times and that the teachings of one Prophet differed in detail from the teachings of another, nevertheless all these revelations had this essential common quality that they proved a means of moral and spiritual regeneration for the peoples for whom they were designed.

At various places in the Quran the same words have been used with reference to the Quranic revelation as have been used here with reference to honey. Honey provides a cure for the physical diseases of man and the most essential quality of the Quranic revelation also is that it is a cure for the spiritual maladies of man. See 10:58, 17:83 & 41:45.

The words, *and follow the ways of thy Lord*, suggest that it is possible for every man to become a recipient of Divine revelation. The only condition he has to fulfil for this purpose is that he should obediently follow the path designed by God and not let his natural instincts become corrupt and vitiated. If he keeps his nature pure and unsullied and is guided by his natural instincts, in the course of time he becomes the recipient of revelation which may be compared to honey in its purity and usefulness.

The verse also implies that when all creatures have been granted وحی according to their respective natural capacities, though those capacities are very limited, it is inconceivable that man, who has been endowed with far greater natural powers and for whom unlimited avenues of spiritual are some among you who are driven to the worst part of life with the result that they know nothing after *having had* knowledge. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, Powerful.1871

مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰۤى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۷۱﴾ ع ۱۵

R. 10.

72. And [a]Allah has favoured some of you above others in *worldly* gifts. But those more favoured will not restore *any part of* their *worldly* gifts to those

وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ ۚ فَمَا الَّذِيْنَ فُضِّلُوْا بِرَآدِّيْ رِزْقِهِمْ عَلٰى مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ

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[a]24:23; 30:29.

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progress have been kept open, should have remained deprived of this great blessing.

1871. Commentary:

In vv. 52-54, it was explained that the false gods of disbelievers were unable to devise a Law for the guidance of mankind, and in the immediately preceding verses it has been made clear that disbelievers too cannot make such a Law. The present verse, however, makes a more general statement and says that a perfect Law can only be framed by Him Who has full control over man's birth, death and reasoning faculties, Who knows his needs and requirements and knows also how to satisfy them. God being Almighty and All-Knowing, all these things are subject to His control. He selects as His Messenger only him of whom He knows that his intellect would not suffer decline. History bears testimony to the fact that whereas there have been thousands of Prophets, there never was one whose reason or intellect ever declined or was impaired. This fact clearly shows that God Who had sent these Messengers had full control over their mental powers. Hence the Almighty and the All-Knowing God alone can send down revelation embodying principles and teaching which can lead man to the realization of the noble and grand purpose of his life.

Nations, like individuals, are subject to the law of decline and death. After attaining to the highest stages of knowledge they begin to show signs of senility and decay or relapse into ignorance. When one nation suffers intellectual or moral death, God makes another nation take its place and gives it a new Prophet and a new Law. The use of the Divine attributes of "All-Knowing" and "Powerful" at the end of the verse suggests that the function of giving true guidance properly belongs to Him Whose knowledge and powers never suffer decline or impairment.

whom their right hands possess, so that they may be equal *sharers* in them. Will they then deny the favour of Allah?[1872]

فِيهِ سَوَآءٌ ۚ أَفَبِنِعْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ۝٧٢

1872. Commentary:

This verse contains another very important argument in favour of Divine revelation. The object and purpose of Divine guidance, it says, is not only to bring about reformation in religious beliefs and doctrines but also to maintain a just balance in the distribution of material wealth and political rights and power. It is a divine law that in every age some individuals or nations, by their superior intellect and harder work, come to acquire ascendancy and control over other individuals or nations. This is neither unfair nor unjust so long as proper opportunities are not denied to the less fortunate peoples also to make proper use of their talents and intelligence for earning the good things of life. But the "haves" have always set their face against all attempts by the "have-nots" to better their material condition and to have a share in the power and privileges the "haves" enjoy. The only way to save the world from the tyranny of those in possession of power and privilege and to open the doors of progress and advancement to real merit and talent and thereby to rehabilitate justice and equality among mankind is that God should send His Messengers. Their advent heralds a new era and the dispossessed and the "have-nots" have their rights restored to them.

So when people become separated from the era of a Prophet by a long time and vested interests grow and become entrenched and power and privileges flow from father to son and common people are denied all share in the government and even so-called religious leaders come to trade upon the superstitious fears of their followers and monopolize all religious authority and common men are not even considered competent to be consulted on religious or secular matters, God raises a Prophet who wages a relentless war against this tyranny and untruth and the so-called leaders who held the reins of power in their hands on the plea of supposed superior abilities are dethroned and man begins to breathe in an atmosphere of true freedom.

Briefly but very beautifully the verse has laid down the Islamic law with regard to private ownership. Whereas on the one hand Islam has recognized the right of private ownership by emphasizing the word *their* in the expression, "of their worldly gifts", it has, by using the words "will restore" (برادى) also accepted the principle of the collective ownership of all things by all human beings as such, because only that thing is "restored" to another person which belongs to him. In fact, Islam has accepted the principle of dual ownership of

73. And [a]Allah has made for you mates from among yourselves, and has made for you, from your mates, sons and grandsons, and has provided you with good things. [b]Will they then believe in vain things and deny the favour of Allah?[1873]

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا
وَّ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَزۡوَاجِكُمۡ بَنِيۡنَ وَحَفَدَةً
وَّ رَزَقَكُمۡ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ؕ اَفَبِالۡبَاطِلِ
يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ وَبِنِعۡمَتِ اللّٰهِ هُمۡ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۷۳﴾

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[a]4:2; 7:190; 30:22; 39:7. [b]29:68.

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everything—the right of possession of a property by the person who earns it and the right in the possession of that property of all human beings as human beings. Moreover, by its institution of Zakāh, the prohibition about hoarding wealth and taking and giving of interest, Islam has sought to prevent the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and thus by its free circulation has kept the avenues of progress equally open for all men. Islam, in reality, neither believes in the right of unrestricted private ownership nor in complete and unreserved possession of wealth and the means of its production by the State. It adopts the middle course.

Ordinarily, the words "whom their right hands possess" mean slaves, and in the Quran these words have generally been used in this sense; but they possess a much wider significance and include all persons under one's control such as private servants, subordinates, labourers, ryots etc.

1873. Important Words:

حفدة (grandsons) is derived from حفد which means, he was quick or went quickly; was continuous in his course or pace. حفد في العمل means, he was quick and active, agile or prompt, in work. حفده means, he served him. حفدة means, assistants, helpers, or auxiliaries and servants; a man's grandchildren or sons' children or a son's children; children or daughters who serve their parents in the house or a man's children or grandchildren who serve him (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In this and the adjoining verses the two themes of the need of a revealed Law and the Unity of Godhead have been dealt with from various points of view, not at random, but in support of each other, and it has been made clear that while on the one hand man is apt to fall a victim to polytheistic beliefs and practices without a revealed Law, on the other the Unity of God requires that God should make provision for man's guidance. As there is no other god except Him, He Himself must provide for the guidance of His creatures. The Oneness of God implies His

74. And [a]they worship beside Allah such as have no power to bestow on them any gift from the heavens or the earth, nor can they *ever* have such power.[1874]

وَيَعۡبُدُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمۡلِكُ لَهُمۡ رِزۡقًا مِّنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۷۴﴾

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[a] 10:19; 22:72; 29:18.

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perfection and that perfection demands that the creation of man must have a purpose, for a purposeless creation suggests a defective Creator. Again, if man were considered to have been created with a purpose, the fulfilment of that purpose would necessarily require an afterlife, for evidently such a purpose is incapable of being fulfilled in the brief span of man's terrestrial existence. Now the purpose which requires limitless and infinite life for its fulfilment must be highly noble and sublime and so the Law which is intended to accomplish it must also proceed from God Himself. Thus the subjects of the Unity of God and the need of revealed guidance have been mentioned in support of each other in different forms in these verses and just as in the physical world we see that things receive support from one another, similarly in the spiritual realm various parts of the spiritual edifice support one another in order to establish the one supreme truth of the Oneness of God and the Unity and uniformity of creation.

The verse adduces another argument in support of the Unity of Godhead, viz. the human instinct of private possession. It was pointed out in the previous verse that the exclusive possession of wealth and power by certain individuals makes it necessary that there should be a revealed Law to maintain equality and justice between different classes. In this verse it is stated that the instinct of private possession prompts man to transmit his property to his natural heirs and not to strangers. How then can he, in fairness to God, dare set up 'partners' who should share Godhead with Him and thus set the seal on his ingratitude to Him? The way in which man displays his ingratitude to God is dealt with in the next verse.

1874. Commentary:

This verse exposes the stupidity of the course followed by polytheists. It purports to say that while they cannot bear to see their property going into the possession of anyone save their own natural descendants, in the case of God they attribute His powers and authority to persons upon whom He has bestowed no such privilege. This course is all the more unjust because the property which they call their own is really not theirs but is entrusted to them by God. If in spite of the fact that they are not the real owners of the property which is in their possession, they consider themselves competent to bequeath it to anyone they like, why should it not

75. So coin not similitudes for Allah. Surely, Allah knows and you know not.[1875]

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْأَمْثَالَ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

76. Allah sets forth *for you* the parable of a slave who is owned,

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَّمْلُوْكًا لَّا يَقْدِرُ

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be in the power of God to make anyone He likes to be the recipient of His revealed Law?

The verse also points out that polytheistic beliefs tend to mar man's material and spiritual progress. A polytheist attributes those powers to false gods which they do not possess and thus his attention is turned away from that Being Who is the source of all power and Who can bestow great favours upon him. It is thus that the intellectual progress and mental advancement of those communities and individuals who hold polytheistic beliefs becomes retarded and impeded while those who believe in the Oneness of God continue to make some progress even in the period of their decline and decay.

1875. Commentary:

The verse means to say that it is foolish on the part of man to devise a law regarding God Himself while he is quite ignorant of His unlimited powers. God has reserved to Himself the right to grant to His servants such privileges in respect of religion as He in His infinite, infallible wisdom regards suitable and for this purpose He chooses him whom He considers really deserving, on account of his sincerity and devotion, to be raised to the rank of His spiritual heir.

In some Scriptures some of the Prophets have been called "sons of God". Such expressions have been used metaphorically and only mean that God chose them to be the heirs to His heavenly kingdom. But men out of their ignorance and perversity take such expressions literally and begin to regard God's honoured servants as His sons in the physical sense of the word. By applying to them the epithet "the sons of God", these Divine Scriptures meant to demonstrate their spiritual eminence and very deep connection with Him. It is foolish to read in such terms any significance unworthy of God.

The words, *Allah knows and you know not,* signify that such expressions when used in heavenly Scriptures do not conflict with God's attributes. For example, the epithet "son" when used by God about a person means one who has such close spiritual connection with Him as is possessed by a son with his parents. But when disbelievers use this term, they use it in its physical sense and thus detract, on the one hand, from the Supreme Exaltedness of God and, on the other, from the dignity of those whom in their folly they wish to honour; because a physical relationship cannot equal the honour and dignity which result from spiritual nearness to God.

having no power over anything; and *a free man* whom We have provided with a fair provision from Ourself, and [a]he spends thereof secretly and openly. Are they equal? Praise be to Allah! But most of them know not.[1876]

عَلٰى شَیۡءٍ وَّمَنۡ رَّزَقۡنٰهُ مِنَّا رِزۡقًا حَسَنًا
فَهُوَ يُنۡفِقُ مِنۡهُ سِرًّا وَّ جَهۡرًا ؕ هَلۡ
يَسۡتَوٗنَ ؕ اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلۡ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ
لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۷۶﴾

77. And Allah sets forth *another* parable of two men: one of them is dumb, having no power

وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيۡنِ اَحَدُهُمَاۤ
اَبۡكَمُ لَا يَقۡدِرُ عَلٰى شَیۡءٍ وَّهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلٰى

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[a] 2:275; 13:23.

1876. Commentary:

The previous verse pointed out that when God uses an endearing term for some of His beloved servants, it connotes something quite different from such an expression when used by idolaters. The present verse presents the Holy Prophet as one whom God loves, and gives the reason of God's love for him. It deals with this subject in a parable. It likens disbelievers to a person who has lost his freedom and is the slave of his own lust and, being in the possession of another, has lost all freedom of will and action. Can such a person in any way be like him who, being free from all sorts of superstitious beliefs and evil practices, spends his great God-given powers in the service of His creatures? Evidently the latter person is by far superior to the former in every respect and deserves in a far greater degree to be blessed with Divine revelation. The implied reference is to the Holy Prophet.

The words, *secretly and openly*, may be understood in three senses: (1) The Holy Prophet served mankind secretly i.e. by praying for them at night and openly i.e. by tangible acts of service. His whole life was, as it were, a continuous and uninterrupted act of selfless service. (2) He served mankind day and night i.e. he served mankind with might and main at all hours of the day and night. (3) His service, though generally unrecognized by those whom he served, did sometimes receive approbation and recognition from them. The verse means to say that all the great natural powers of the Holy Prophet were fully and completely employed in the service of humanity and in this service he gave no thought to his own comfort and it made no difference to him whether or not his service was acknowledged.

The verse also suggests that there are some good deeds which remain unknown to men in this life and hence go without recognition. Such good deeds demand that there should be a "day" when they may be over anything, and he is a burden to his master; whithersoever he sends him, he brings no good. Can he be equal to him who enjoins justice and who is himself on the straight path?**1877**

مَوْلٰىهُ ۙ اَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّهْهُّ لَا يَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ ؕ
هَلْ يَسْتَوِيْ هُوَ ۙ وَمَنْ يَّاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ۙ
وَهُوَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ع ﴿۷۷﴾ ع ١٠ ٦ ١٦

R. 11.

78. [a]And to Allah belongs the unseen of the heavens and the

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَاۤ

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[a] 11:124; 18:27; 35:39.

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recognized and suitably rewarded.

1877. Commentary:

This verse contains another parable concerning the Holy Prophet and his enemies. It says that the Prophet’s enemies are mute and dumb. All sorts of crimes and sins are committed before their eyes, but they do not even open their lips to condemn them or to dissuade or check people from them. They have never said a word to safeguard the honour of God, their Lord and Master. It is only the Prophet who has always raised his voice against sin and iniquity.

Again, says the verse, if the Prophet’s adversaries could not bid others to do good works and not associate equals with God, they could, at least do good works themselves and declare the Holiness of God by their own example. But they did none of these things. They could neither carry their own burdens nor help others carry their burdens. But the Holy Prophet not only himself practised virtue but exhorted and enjoined others to be just, equitable and God-fearing. Therefore he, and not they, deserved to be chosen for Divine favours.

The theme in this and the preceding verse is the same, but these two verses refer to two different classes of disbelievers. The preceding verse refers to such disbelievers as are slaves to superstitious beliefs and idolatrous practices and customs and though possessing the means and the ability to do some useful and effective work, abstain from doing it for fear of incurring public opprobrium; while the present verse refers to such disbelievers as are not only slaves to superstitious practices but also lack the means and the ability to do any good work. As contrasted with these two classes of disbelievers the Holy Prophet is not only free from all sorts of superstitious beliefs and foolish customs but is also endowed with great natural powers. He uses his great God-given gifts in the service of mankind while disbelievers are a burden and a sort of a stigma on the Holiness of God Who has created them.

earth; and [a]the matter of the *promised* Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye, nay, it is nearer still. Surely, Allah has power over all things.**1878**

أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ
أَقْرَبُ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٨﴾

79. And [b]Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and [c]gave you ears and eyes and hearts, that you might be grateful.**1879**

وَاللّٰهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْ بُطُوْنِ أُمَّهٰتِكُمْ
لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا ۙ وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ
وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۙ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾

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[a]7:188; 54:51. [b]39:7. [c]23:79; 67:24.

1878. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that as disbelievers have stood in the way of the Holy Prophet whom God has chosen for the bestowal of His favours, they will be visited with sudden and terrible punishment. This prophecy will certainly be fulfilled because it has been made by God Who has power over all things.

It is interesting to note how the verse anticipates future critics of Islam who say that the unprecedented success which attended the Holy Prophet and Muslims was due only to natural causes. The verse forestalls this objection by saying that it is God, the Almighty and Knower of all secrets, Who is speaking of the imminent destruction of disbelievers. The fulfilment of this prophecy will not be a chance occurrence but one that will be brought about by the Almighty God. This prophecy was made towards the end of the Prophet’s stay in Mecca. And it is well-known that shortly after the power of the idolatrous Arabs was broken, it was followed by the overthrow of the Persian and Roman Empires, the two great military powers of the time. All this was foretold at a time when the Prophet and his followers were being persecuted in Mecca. Who can say that all this was only the inevitable result of natural causes and was not due to a special decree of the All-Powerful God?

The words, *the twinkling of an eye*, mean, "within a short time". The prophecy implied in the words, "the matter of the Promised Hour," met its remarkable fulfilment in the Battle of Badr and finally in the conquest of Mecca.

1879. Commentary:

The verse makes a most moving appeal to the gratitude of man. It says that God has endowed him with faculties of sight, hearing and understanding so that by their proper use he might fulfil the great object of his creation. But it is a pity that he

80. [a]Do they not see the birds held under subjection in the vault of heaven? None keeps them back save Allah. Verily, in that are Signs for a people who believe.[1880]

اَلَمۡ یَرَوۡا اِلَی الطَّیۡرِ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ فِیۡ جَوِّ
السَّمَآءِ ؕ مَا یُمۡسِکُہُنَّ اِلَّا اللّٰہُ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ
ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۸۰﴾

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[a] 67:20.

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not only does not make proper use of these faculties for the attainment of this noble object but often misuses them and thus, instead of winning the pleasure of God, deserves and draws upon himself His punishment.

The verse continues the main theme of the chapter and gives one more argument in support of the need for Divine revelation viz. that when man is born he is devoid of all kinds of knowledge but is endowed with the faculties of hearing, sight and understanding. With their help he gradually acquires knowledge of the physical world. He depends upon these Divine gifts for the acquisition of material knowledge but in the matter of spiritual knowledge he has the hardihood to deny the need of Divine guidance.

The words, *that you might be grateful*, point to the fact that the gifts of God as mentioned in this verse should have naturally led man to grateful appreciation of Divine grace, but instead they serve to make him proud and so deny the need of Divine assistance.

One point worthy of special note in this verse is that the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding have been mentioned in the order in which they help man to acquire knowledge. Scientists have only recently discovered the fact that first of all a new-born child makes use of the power of hearing. The faculty of seeing develops later and the faculty of understanding is the last to mature. The fact that in many of the lower animals the eyes of the young remain closed for several days after birth confirms the above view. The fact that the Quran should have mentioned a physiological truth which was not generally known at the time of its revelation certainly constitutes an unanswerable argument in favour of its Divine origin.

1880. Commentary:

Some commentators of the Quran erroneously consider that this verse alludes to the Almightiness of God Who has given the birds the power to fly in the air but there is no such allusion here to any such power and might of God. The verse only contains a reference to the punishment that was soon to overtake the disbelievers of Mecca. The keeping back of the birds signifies the withholding of the punishment that was in store for them. Arabic poetry abounds in verses where birds are spoken of as attending a victorious army to feed on the dead bodies of

81. And Allah has made for you, in your houses, a place of rest, and has made for you, of the skins of cattle, abodes which you find light at the time when you travel and at the time when you halt; and of their wool, and their furs, and their hair, *He has supplied you with* household goods and articles of use for a time.[1881]

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا
وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ جُلُوْدِ الْاَنْعَامِ بُيُوْتًا
تَسْتَخِفُّوْنَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ
اِقَامَتِكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا وَاَوْبَارِهَا
وَاَشْعَارِهَآ اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿۸۱﴾

82. And Allah has made for you, of that which He has created, things affording shade; and He has made for you, in the mountains, places of shelter;

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلٰلًا وَّجَعَلَ
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ اَكْنَانًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ
سَرَابِيْلَ تَقِيْكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيْلَ

---

the enemy killed and left on the field of battle. The great poet Nābighah says:

اذا ما غدى بالجيش حلق فوقه
عصا ئب طير تهتدى بالعصائب

i.e. When he marches out, flocks of birds attend his victorious army, knowing that he will surely defeat his enemy and thus would provide a good feast for them. So the hovering of birds according to Arabic idiom is symbolic of the defeat and destruction of a people. Verses 105:2-5 contain a clear reference to this significance of the Arabic idiom. The verse under comment means to say that God has withheld Muslims from waging war against disbelievers. But once they were given permission to fight, the disbelievers will be defeated and destroyed and their dead bodies will be eaten by the birds which they see flying in the sky.

1881. Important Words:

اثاثا (household goods) is derived from the word which means, it was or became much in quantity; abundant or numerous and great or large. اث النبات means, the herbage was or became abundant or plenteous and tangled or luxuriant. اثاث means, goods; or utensils and furniture of a house or tent; household goods; all property consisting of camels, and sheep or goats and slaves and utensils and furniture or household goods or abundant property (Lane).

Commentary:

Disbelievers are told here not to excite the displeasure of God by rejecting His Prophet and thus deprive themselves of His great and He has made for you garments which protect you from heat, and coats of mail which protect you in your wars. Thus does He complete His favour on you, that you may submit *to Him*.**1882**

تَقِيْكُمْ بَأْسَكُمْ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُوْنَ ۝٨٢

83. [a]But if they turn away, then thou art responsible only for the plain delivery *of the Message*.**1883**

فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ۝٨٣

84. They recognize the favour of Allah, yet they deny it; and

يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا

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[a] 3:21; 5:93.

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blessings and boons.

1882. Important Words:

اكنانا (places of shelter) is the plural of كن (*kinnun*) which is derived from كن (*kanna*). They say كن العلم فى نفسه i.e. he kept the knowledge secret in his heart. كن (*kinnun*) means, a place of retreat or concealment; the shelter of a wall; a thing which serves for veiling, covering or protecting (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse continues the theme of the preceding verse and enumerates some more Divine blessings, e.g., shades of trees, shelters in the mountains, trees that save men from the heat of the sun, armour that protects them in battle, etc. Disbelievers are told that all these Divine gifts and favours were bestowed upon them that they might live in peace and comfort and be grateful to God, but they have, instead, proved ungrateful to Him and have used them to frustrate His purpose. So they shall very soon reap the consequences of their ingratitude.

The expression لعلكم تسلمون (that you may submit *to Him*) may also mean that you may protect and save others from harm by means of these favours. Read in this sense the sentence would mean that these blessings were bestowed upon the Meccans in order that they might protect themselves and in gratitude to God protect others from harm, but they instead made these very favours the means of oppressing others.

1883. Commentary:

The words, *If they turn away*, mean that in spite of this offer of peace made to disbelievers, they are determined to compel the Prophet to flee from Mecca. By doing so they are incurring a grave responsibility.

most of them are *confirmed* disbelievers.[1884]

وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٨٤

١١ ع ١٧

R. 12.

85. [a]And *remember* the day when We shall raise up a witness from every people, then those who disbelieve shall not be permitted *to make amends*, [b]nor shall they be allowed to solicit *God's* favour.[1885]

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ۝٨٥

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[a]4:42; 16:90. [b]30:58; 41:25.

1884. Commentary:

The addition of the particle ال to the word کافرون is intended to intensify its meaning. Whereas the expression اکثرھم کافرون means, most of them are disbelievers, the words, اکثرھم الکافرون mean, most of them are confirmed disbelievers. The verse means to say that the disbelievers of Mecca have not only denied the material favours of God, but have rejected His spiritual favours also.

1885. Commentary:

After mentioning the ingratitude and iniquities of disbelievers in the preceding verses, the present verse again reverts to the subject of the life after death. This is done to warn disbelievers that not only will they be punished in this life for their disbelief and misdeeds, but will also receive a heavier punishment in the life to come. The fact that all the peoples who ever lived on this earth will be present to see their humiliation on the Day of Judgement will intensify their shame and agony. All the Prophets will also be there to bear witness against them. See also 4:42-43.

The verse constitutes yet one more testimony to the truth of the Quran. It says that Messengers were sent to all peoples and nations of the world. This is a claim in which the Quran stands alone among all the revealed Scriptures. The truth of this claim has now begun to dawn upon mankind. It was revealed to the world about fourteen hundred years ago by the Quran.

The expression لایؤذن (shall not be permitted) does not mean, as wrongly understood by some commentators, that disbelievers shall not be permitted to speak to God, because in several verses of the Quran we are told that on the Day of Judgement disbelievers will confess their guilt and in its extenuation will proffer various kinds of excuses before God. The expression either means that disbelievers shall not be permitted to enter Heaven or that permission shall not be granted to anyone to intercede with God on their behalf. The latter meaning is supported by vv. 2:256; 10:4; 20:110; 34:24; 53:27; wherein it

86. [a]And when those who did wrong *actually* see the punishment, it will not be made light for them, nor will they be granted respite.**1886**

وَ اِذَا رَاَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ
عَنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾

87. And [b]when those who associate partners *with God* will see their associate-gods, they will say, 'Our Lord, these are our associate-gods whom we used to call upon instead of Thee.' Thereupon, they will retort on them with the words, 'Surely, you are liars.'**1887**

وَ اِذَا رَاَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا شُرَكَآءَهُمْ قَالُوْا
رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُرَكَآؤُنَا الَّذِيْنَ كُنَّا نَدْعُوْا
مِنْ دُوْنِكَ ۚ فَاَلْقَوْا اِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ اِنَّكُمْ
لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ ۚ

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[a]2:166. [b]30:14.

is stated that intercession is only possible after Divine permission. V 77:37 contains another interpretation of the words لايوذن viz. that disbelievers shall not be allowed to make excuses.

The words, *We shall raise up a witness*, may also mean that the Prophets will bear witness against the disbelievers by their personal example. The Prophets would, as it were, say to disbelievers that when they (the Prophets) could spiritually rise so high by acting upon Divine teaching why could not they (the disbelievers)? The verse thus implies that every Prophet by his personal example serves as a living example of the great moral and spiritual reformation which his teaching is capable of effecting. This is why no religious teaching has ever been revealed except through a Prophet.

1886. Commentary:

The punishment referred to in this verse relates to the next life.

1887. Commentary:

It is indeed strange that disbelievers who in this life oppose Divine Messengers for the sake of their false gods will on the Day of Judgement, inveigh against those very false gods and request that they be severely punished because they led them to disbelief and ruin. In return the false gods will denounce their erstwhile followers with the quick and emphatic retort, "Surely, you are liars". This altercation between the false gods and their followers before God shows that friendships based on sin and the denial of truth never endure.

The words القوا اليهم القول mean, (a) they would say emphatically; (b) they would reply quickly. The words, *it will not be made light for*

88. And [a]they will offer submission to Allah on that day, and all that they used to forge shall fail them.**1888**

وَاَلْقَوْا اِلَى اللّٰهِ يَوْمَئِذِنِ السَّلَمَ وَضَلَّ
عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾

89. [b]*As for* those who disbelieve and turn men away from the way of Allah, We will add punishment to *their* punishment because they acted corruptly.**1889**

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
زِدْنٰهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يُفْسِدُوْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾

90. [c]And *remember* the day when We will raise up in every people a witness against them from amongst themselves, and We will bring thee as a witness against these. And [d]We have sent down to thee the Book to explain everything, and a

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِيْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ
اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيْدًا عَلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً وَّبُشْرٰى لِلْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ ع ۱۲ ۶ ۱۸

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[a]16:29. [b]7:46; 11:20; 14:4. [c]4:42; 16:85. [d]10:38; 12:112.

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them, occurring in the preceding verse show that the excuses of disbelievers will not be accepted and they will be sternly told that if their false gods had tempted and inveigled them they should have resisted that temptation.

1888. Commentary:

When disbelievers see that their false gods had disowned them they will change their attitude and in a humble and penitent tone will profess their sincere loyalty to God and say that their idol-worship was but a means to an end—to have concentration of mind in worship, and that it was prompted by a sincere desire to win the pleasure of God and not by any motive of rebellion against Him.

1889. Commentary:

The verse mentions two classes of disbelievers; (1) those who are themselves misguided and (2) those who mislead others also. The latter class of disbelievers will have double punishment in the next life. The irony of it lies in the fact that the clever people who deceived their simple-minded followers into believing that they would be responsible for their salvation will find their own punishment to be double the punishment of their credulous followers for whose salvation they proudly said they would be responsible.

guidance, and a mercy, and glad tidings to those who submit *to God.*[1890]

R. 13.

91. Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and manifest evil, and wrongful

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيْتَآئِ
ذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ

1890. Commentary:

This verse brings to completion the theme of the preceding verses and purports to say that when on the Day of Judgement various Prophets will present their own examples to establish the guilt of disbelievers, the Holy Prophet also will be presented as a witness against the latter. Disbelievers will be told that when the Holy Prophet who was like them and was one of them eschewed all idolatrous practices and succeeded not only himself in winning the pleasure of God but also led many others to the goal of their life, why could not they benefit by his example? Was this not due to his belief in the Divine teaching which was revealed to him and their rejection of that teaching and their refusal even to recognize its need?

The verse then proceeds to describe the eminent qualities of the Quran and says that it contains an exposition of all the spiritual needs of man and of the means which attract the Grace and Mercy of God.

The words كل شيء (everything) should not be understood to mean everything absolutely, but only all those things that pertain to the spiritual needs of man. So the verse means to say that all fundamental and basic principles which are necessary for the moral and spiritual development of man are embodied in the Quran. The fact that the exposition and explanation of some injunctions and principles is to be found in the Ḥadīth may not be understood to contradict this claim of the Quran. The Ḥadīth contains only explanations and expositions of the Quranic teaching and nothing over and above it or in opposition to it. The Holy Prophet was the greatest exponent of the Quran and so what he said in explanation of a certain injunction of the Quran was perfectly in harmony with it and was free from the possibility of error. This view is also corroborated by the Quran itself (53:4). Indeed they are in grievous error who say that the Prophet was an ordinary mortal like them and therefore they were not bound by all the interpretations, expositions and explanations of the Quranic verses given by him and that they could explain and interpret the Quran as well as he.

transgression. He admonished you that you may take heed.[1891]

تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۝٩١

1891. Important Words:

ذی القربی (like kindred). قربي is infinitive noun from قرب which means, it or he was or became near قرابة like قربي is also infinitive noun from قرب but whereas the former is relationship in a general sense, the latter viz. قربي is relationship by the female side, but both words may also mean relationship or relationship by the female side (Lane).

منكر (manifest evil) is derived from نكر. They say نكرالرجل i.e. he did not know or recognize the man. نكرالامر (*amra*) means, he was ignorant of the affair. نكرالامر (*amru*) means, the affair was or became difficult, hard, arduous or severe or it was or became bad, evil, abominable, foul or disapproved. منكر means, ignored or unknown, denied or disacknowledged, any action deemed or declared to be bad, evil, hateful, foul, abominable, indecent, unbecoming, etc., (Lane & Aqrab).

احسان See 2:113.

فحشا See 4:16.

بغی See 2:91.

Commentary:

In the preceding verse the Quran claims to possess four great qualities: (1) It is an explanation of everything, (2) it is a guidance and (3) a mercy and (4) glad tidings for those who submit to God. The present and the following section (*rukū'*) establish the truth of this claim and show that the Quran eminently fulfils the supreme purpose which its revelation was intended to serve. The present verse also, as it were in a nutshell, proves this claim of the Quran to be well-founded. It contains three commandments and three prohibitions. These three commandments and prohibitions briefly embody all the various stages of the moral and spiritual development of man. The verse thus constitutes a very good example of what has been said about the Quran in the preceding verse i.e. that it is an explanation of everything تبیانا لکل شیء. The verse ends with the words لعلکم تذکرون which mean, that you may remember the obligations which you owe to God and His creatures and also that you may extol the glory of God and celebrate His praise. Since these are the objects of man's creation, the verse gives the Faithful the glad tidings that by following injunctions embodied in it they will achieve the purpose of their creation. It is indeed marvellous that the Quran should have, in the brief compass of a short verse, thrown light on all those matters which establish its above-mentioned great claim.

It is impossible to find such combination of brevity and comprehensiveness in any other religious Scripture. And what is more remarkable is the fact that the words of the verse are quite plain and simple and can be easily understood by a person of ordinary intelligence.

A question cannot be understood to have been fully dealt with unless light is thrown on both its positive and negative aspects. Again, a religious

Scripture cannot claim to be perfect unless it possesses the following essential characteristics:

1. It must enjoin the performance of such actions as lead to man's moral and spiritual perfection and forbid the doing of such actions as are detrimental to the realization of such perfection.

2. It must prescribe laws which are applicable not to one particular individual or community but to the largest number of individuals and communities; and in the formulation of these laws due regard should have been paid to the dispositions and temperaments of all those people for whom it is intended, so that they may not find it difficult to act upon its teaching, every person according to his or her capacity.

3. The third characteristic that a perfect Law must possess is that its teaching should be practical and practicable and acting upon it should not lead to deterioration in human morals, intellect or civilization. The present verse beautifully combines all these essential qualities of a perfect Law. It has not failed to deal properly with both the positive and negative sides of the all-important question of the moral development of man. It has enjoined justice, the doing of good to others and kindness as between kindred; and has forbidden indecency, manifest evil and wrongful transgression.

Now strict justice implies that a person should treat others as he is treated by them. He should return to others the good or evil to the extent or measure to which he has received it from them. In relation to God عدل (justice), which is the first virtue mentioned, would mean that just as God has been good to man, man should render to God His due, and should not by his conduct render Him liable to criticism. He must not give to others what is due to God, for example, his love or devotion. The association of false gods with Him is also doing injustice to God. Similarly, it is contrary to the demands of عدل (justice) that a man should arrogate to himself an attribute which belongs exclusively to God. For example, it is the special prerogative of God to reveal religious Laws. Now if any man arrogates to himself this Divine prerogative and begins to frame a religious Law and seeks to give it the status of a revealed Law, he transgresses the bounds of justice. The observance of عدل in relation to God is calculated to abolish all kinds of *shirk* (idolatry), infidelity and disobedience to God. Higher than عدل (justice) is the stage of احسان (goodness). At this stage man should have no regard for the kind of treatment he receives from others. He should do good to others regardless of what sort of treatment he receives from them. He must do good to others even if he is maltreated by them. His conduct at this stage should not be actuated by considerations of reciprocity but he should do good to others regardless of the fact whether he has received any good from them or even if they have ill-treated him. This is certainly a higher stage of morals than the first stage of عدل. The qualities of forgiveness, charity, the giving of alms, social service, etc., all fall under this category. The promotion and patronage of knowledge and the systematization of its different branches also are included in this head because it has for its object the material and spiritual wellbeing of man.

The last and highest stage of moral development of man is ايتاء ذى القربى (giving like kindred). At this stage a man is expected to do good to others not in return for any good received from them, nor with the idea of doing more good than the good received, but prompted by a natural impulse, as good is done to very near blood relations. This is a much higher moral stage than the stage of احسان (doing of good). At the stage of احسان the doer of the good may have at the back of his mind the idea that the person concerned has done him some good and that he should do him a better turn and thus win public approbation. Or, in forgiving a person who has done him some wrong, he has the satisfaction that his act of forgiveness would turn a foe into a friend. But at the stage of ايتاء ذى القربى (giving like kindred) a person does good to others prompted as if by natural impulse. His condition at this stage resembles that of a mother whose love for her children is the result of a natural impulse. Her sacrifices and the hardships she willingly suffers for her children are prompted by no hope of return or appreciation. They spring from the natural fountain of love which God has implanted in her nature. At this stage the moral development of man becomes complete.

It may be noted that man's relations with God cannot possibly go beyond the stage of عدل, for there can be no question of man's doing good to God in any form. It is only his fellow human beings with whom he can deal according to his own moral condition at the stage of احسان or ايتاء ذى القربى. This implies a beautiful hint that in order to attain the nearness of God and to win His favour it is essential for man to do good to His creatures. A description of these three stages of morals constitutes the positive side of the subject of man's moral development. Its negative side is portrayed in the three prohibitions which are explained by the three Arabic words viz. فحشاء (indecency), منكر (manifest evil) and بغى (wrongful transgression). فحشاء means such vices of which the knowledge is confined to the doer alone, while منكر means those evils which other men also see and condemn, though they may not suffer any loss or the infringement of their own rights by them. بغى (wrongful transgression), however, comprehends all those vices and evils which not only are seen, felt and hated by men but which do them definite harm also. These three simple words cover all conceivable vices.

A perfect teaching must have due regard for the moral requirements of men of different temperaments and dispositions. The verse under comment fully satisfies this very essential condition. For there are men who may be guilty of indecent acts but would not approve of wrongful acts of which the harm extends to others. There are others who would

92. And [a]fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have made a covenant; and break not the oaths after making them firm, while you have made Allah your surety. Certainly, Allah knows what you do.[1892]

وَاَوۡفُوۡا بِعَهۡدِ اللّٰهِ اِذَا عٰهَدۡتُّمۡ وَلَا تَنۡقُضُوا
الۡاَيۡمَانَ بَعۡدَ تَوۡكِيۡدِهَا وَقَدۡ جَعَلۡتُمُ اللّٰهَ
عَلَيۡكُمۡ كَفِيۡلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا
تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

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[a] 6:153; 13:21; 17:35.

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not infringe the rights of other people but who suffer from moral indecencies whose harm is confined to their own selves, such as back-biting, jealousy and the harbouring of ill-will against others. The three brief words mentioned above embody all the different forms of vice to which man can fall a victim. Thus this short verse of the Quran has covered, by its three commands and three prohibitions, the whole field of virtue and vice and contains requisite guidance for men holding different motives at the different stages of their moral development.

By an appropriate selection and arrangement of its words the verse has explained how a man can effectively eschew all vices and acquire all virtues. It mentions the three categories of virtues implying thereby that in acquiring them a man should first cultivate the quality of عدل (justice), then will he be able to cultivate the nobler and higher quality of احسان (goodness), and lastly, after he has acquired these two moral qualities, will he succeed in cultivating the quality of ایتاء ذی القربی, the highest and noblest of all the moral qualities. But in eschewing vices he should begin with the most obvious and harmful of them viz. بغی (wrongful transgression), and after he has been successful in conquering this vice he should try to master the less obvious vice of منکر (manifest evil) and when he has mastered this evil also he should try to bring under control the more subtle vice of فحشاء (indecency). The description of the good moral qualities and that of the corresponding vices together is intended to draw attention to the important fact that in the cultivation of good moral qualities one has to start from the lowest rung of the ladder, while in the renunciation of vices he has to begin with the most pronounced and harmful one. Thus for his moral perfection man has to traverse six stages of development and the gradation of these stages into six quite harmonizes with a well-known law of nature, viz. that everything has to go through six stages of evolution before it reaches perfection. The verse, as it were, embodies the complete course of moral and spiritual evolution and growth of man.

1892. Commentary:

This verse further explains and repeats the theme of the previous

93. And be not like unto her who, after having made it strong, breaks her yarn into pieces. [a]You make your oaths a means of deceit between you, *for fear* lest one people become more powerful than another people. Surely, Allah tries you therewith, and on the Day of Resurrection He will make clear to you that wherein you differed.**1893**

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّتِيْ نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ اَنْكَاثًا ؕ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًاۢ بَيْنَكُمْ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ اُمَّةٌ هِيَ اَرْبٰى مِنْ اُمَّةٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا يَبْلُوْكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ ؕ وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

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[a] 16:95.

verse, viz. believers are enjoined faithfully to discharge the obligations they owe to God which are covered by the words "covenant of Allah" and the duties they owe to their fellow-men which are implied in the words, "the oaths". It must be remembered that oaths taken in defiance of God's commandment are not binding.

The expression "covenant of Allah" means, taking the oath of allegiance at the hands of the Holy Prophet; or it means, entering into the Faith of Islam and thus binding oneself to abide by its ordinances. This interpretation of "the covenant of Allah" is based on vv. 3:77, 78; 9:4; 33:16; 48:11; which show that the words "covenant of Allah" mean "Islam".

The words, *and break not the oaths after confirming them*, refer to the covenants which men make among themselves in the name of God. As these covenants are made in the name of God, He has been declared as having been made their surety, and if they are broken, He would intervene and punish the offender.

1893. Important Words:

انکاثا (pieces) is the plural of نکث (*nikthun*) which is derived from نکث (*nakatha*). They say نکث الحبل i.e. he untwisted the end of a rope. نکث العهد means, he broke the covenant. نکث السواک means, he made the head of the tooth-stick to be disintegrated, disunited, or separated, in its fibres (Lane & Aqrab).

دخلا (means of deceit) is derived from دخل which means, he or it entered or went or got in. دخل (*dakhalun*) means, a thing that enters into another thing and is not of it; people or persons who assert their relationship to those of whom they are not; badness, corruptness or unsoundness; or a bad, a corrupt or an unsound state or quality. They say فی عقله دخل i.e. in his intellect is an unsoundness; rottenness; leanness or emaciation; perfidiousness, faithlessness or treachery; deceit, guile or circumvention. The Quranic expression ولا تتخذوا ايمانكم دخلا بينكم means, And make ye not your oaths to be a means of deceit or guile or circumvention between you. (Lane & Aqrab).

اربى (more powerful) is derived from ربا which means, it (the thing) increased or augmented; it increased by usury; ربت الارض means, the ground became large and swelled. اربيت means, I took more than I gave. اربى على الخميس ونحوها means, he exceeded the age of fifty and the like. ربا means, an excess and an addition. اربى means, more numerous, and more abundant in wealth (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse may be taken as a continuation of the subject matter of the previous verse or it may be understood to deal with a new subject. If it be taken as a continuation of the subject of the previous verse, it contains a warning to believers not to break covenants they have made with one another, for if solemn pledges are broken mutual trust disappears and the unity of the community becomes disintegrated. In fact, the strict observance of covenants and fulfilment of promises are really indispensable for the maintenance of communal concord and unity; for communal concord depends on mutual cooperation and the doing of good to one another. But these things are possible only when men abide by their promises and pledges. If promises solemnly made are not kept, general distrust prevails and the result is total disintegration of the unity of the community.

The verse may not only refer to the covenants which individuals make with one another, but may also comprise that solemn compact which Muslims make at the hands of their Imām or *Khalīfah*, binding themselves to obey him and under his guidance to strive for the progress of the community and the Faith. The Faithful are warned in this verse that since God has organized them into a united and disciplined community under one Leader to whom they have sworn allegiance, they should remain true to him and refrain from creating discord. If they failed to live up to their high ideals, Islam would lose the prestige and power it has gained through their sacrifices. The verse also teaches the great truth, which Muslim statesmen and leaders may well bear in mind, that discord created by a few individuals breaks up a whole organization and all the labour expended on the organization of the community is wasted and fresh and renewed efforts have to be made to reorganize it. They should therefore be always on their guard against mischief-makers because if they allowed their organization to be broken up, they would be like that foolish woman who, "after having made it strong, breaks her yarn into pieces".

The verse seems also to refer to compacts which Muslims in future were destined to make with other nations. In that case, it would be taken as having started a new subject and the Muslims would be regarded as having been enjoined to remain faithful to their treaties, for it is on the strict observance of treaties that the peace of the world depends. The words, *you make your oaths to be a means of deceit between you*, refer not only to compacts which individuals make with one another but also to the treaties which nations make with one another. Both are inviolable and both must be strictly observed.

The words ان تكون امة هى اربى من امة may be interpreted in three different ways: (1) because one people (non-Muslims) are stronger and wealthier than the other people (Muslims) i.e. to gain time by hoodwinking the stronger party; (2) lest one people (non-Muslims) should become stronger and wealthier than the other people (Muslims) i.e. to exploit the weaker party; and (3) that one people (Muslims) may become stronger and wealthier than the other people (non-Muslims) i.e. to weaken the stronger party. According to the first rendering, the verse would mean that Muslims should not use the treaties which they make with another nation in order to deceive them because they happen to be stronger in numbers and resources. That is to say, Muslims should not seek to put other people off their guard by concluding with them a treaty of peace, thus biding their time till a favourable opportunity arises and they are strong enough to dishonour their treaty.

According to the second rendering, the verse would mean that Muslims should not make treaties with a weaker nation with the evil intent of exploiting it and fraudulently taking possession of its country. According to the third rendering, however, the verse would mean that Muslims should not make treaties with other people with the object of weakening their strength or impeding their progress. These are the noble and sublime Islamic teachings with regard to the sacredness and inviolability of international treaties. To see one's country great and powerful is a natural desire but under no circumstances is it permissible to Muslims to achieve it at the cost of treaties solemnly made or by fraudulent means. Treaties should be entered into with the noble object of maintaining international peace, and not for deceiving or harming other nations. The West may well learn a lesson from this noble teaching of the Quran.

The words, *Surely, Allah tries you therewith*, mean that such opportunities come as a trial, and God will see whether Muslims act upon the moral precepts of Islam or are led astray by the love of the world and imitate the example of other people. These teachings furnish remarkable evidence of the truth of the Quran and of the supremacy of Islam over other religions. The verse was revealed at Mecca, when Muslims did not possess even a single yard of land, but they were given teachings which were meant to guide the conduct of leaders of great nations and rulers of empires, and the instructions given were so noble and sublime that it was not possible to deny their superiority over other similar teachings. All the unrest and lack of trust so widespread

94. And [a]if Allah had enforced *His* will, He would surely have made you *all* one people; but He lets go astray him who wishes *it*, and guides him who wishes *it*; and you shall surely be questioned concerning that which you have been doing.[1894]

وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً
وَّلٰكِنْ يُّضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَلَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

95. And make not your oaths a means of deceit between you; or *your* foot will slip after it has been firmly established, and you will taste evil because you turned *people* away from the path of Allah, and you will have a severe punishment.[1895]

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْۤا اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًاۢ بَيْنَكُمْ
فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌۢ بَعْدَ ثُبُوْتِهَا وَتَذُوْقُوا
السُّوْٓءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُّمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ
وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٩٥﴾

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[a] 5:49; 11:119.

among the nations of the world today is due to non-observance of these teachings.

1894. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the authors of such treaties as are concluded with the intent to deceive other peoples have in view no object other than that of establishing their own dominion in the world. But, says the Quran, if it had been the will of God that there should be only one dominant power in the earth, He Himself would have made one. There is therefore no justification in having recourse to dishonest means for the purpose of subduing other nations. A nation which seeks to impose its will and foist its domination upon other peoples against their consent will itself someday fall victim to the evil designs of another nation and lose its freedom.

1895. Commentary:

The injunction contained in the previous verse has been repeated in the present one in order to bring home to Muslims the fact that although in principle it is not right to conclude treaties with dishonest motives, yet Muslims should particularly abstain from concluding such treaties, inasmuch as they are the bearers of the Divine Law and dishonest conduct on their part, even though it be in political affairs, will make men turn away from Islam. The words, *or your foot will slip after it has been firmly established*, mean that such conduct on the part of

96. [a]And barter not the covenant of Allah for a paltry price. Surely, that which is with Allah is better for you if you only knew.[1896]

وَلَا تَشۡتَرُوۡا بِعَہۡدِ اللّٰہِ ثَمَنًا قَلِیۡلًا ؕ اِنَّمَا
عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ ہُوَ خَیۡرٌ لَّکُمۡ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ
تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۹۶﴾

97. That which you have shall pass away, but that which is with Allah is lasting. [b]And We will certainly give those who are steadfast their reward according to the best of their works.[1897]

مَا عِنۡدَکُمۡ یَنۡفَدُ وَ مَا عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ بَاقٍ ؕ
وَ لَنَجۡزِیَنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ صَبَرُوۡۤا اَجۡرَہُمۡ
بِاَحۡسَنِ مَا کَانُوۡا یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۹۷﴾

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[a]3:78. [b]11:12; 39:11.

Muslims will weaken their power after it had become established in the earth. These words implied the great promise that although Muslims were being bitterly persecuted at Mecca by their opponents, yet the time was soon coming when God would establish their power on earth because such rules of conduct could only be laid down for a people who were destined to play a very prominent part in the politics of the world. The fulfilment of this prophecy under most unfavourable circumstances constitutes conclusive proof of the Quran being the revealed word of God.

1896. Commentary:

A great future was promised to Muslims in the foregoing verses. They were to attain power and glory. But, says the present verse, when people attain to power they fall victim to all sorts of temptations. Their enemies employ spies and informers from among them and offer large bribes to get possession of their State secrets. So Muslims are warned against succumbing to such temptations in the words: *And barter not the covenant of Allah for a paltry price*. They are warned that they would establish a republic at Medina, and their enemies would offer large bribes to some of their own members to disclose the secrets of the Muslim State to them, but these bribes, however large, would be quite a paltry thing compared with the boons which they would receive from God if they remained loyal to their State and led righteous lives.

The words, *If you only knew*, mean that Muslims could not even imagine, in the very difficult conditions under which they lived at Mecca, that they would ever rise to such great power as was ultimately theirs.

1897. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the sums of money which will be offered to you as bribes will soon be spent but the boons and favours which God

98. [a]Whoso acts righteously, whether male or female and is a believer, We will surely grant him a pure life; and We will surely bestow on such their reward according to the best of their works.1898

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ
اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۹۸﴾

99. And when thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan the rejected.1899

فَاِذَا قَرَاْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ
الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿۹۹﴾

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[a] 3:196; 4:125; 20:113.

will confer on you will endure not only in this world but will extend to the next.

The words, *according to the best of their works*, mean that while rewarding Muslims, God will take into consideration their best works and will reward them according to those works. In fact, the good works which a man does are of various degrees; some being of a higher standard of excellence than others. For the purpose of rewarding Muslims God will not consider their deeds of the lower type nor even of the middling standard, but will take into consideration their best works and will reward them according to these. Nay, God's reward will exceed even their best works, for it will be at least ten times as much as their best deeds (6:161). But this great reward, it is added, will be conferred only on those who do not waver under hardships nor barter away their faith for a paltry price.

1898. Commentary:

Whereas on the one hand the verse recognizes the equality of rights of men and women and promises both equal share in the favours that God will confer on them, on the other it tells disbelievers that, as they have degraded women, dominion and authority would be taken away from them and would be given to a people—Muslims—who will give women their due rights.

1899. Commentary:

In v. 97 it was said that those who would remain steadfast under hard trials would be favoured with great rewards. The present verse tells believers that the best way by which they could guard heavenly boons is that they should seek the protection of God against the attacks of Satan. The reason why Muslims are bidden to seek the protection of God against Satan while beginning to recite the Quran is that it is a most precious treasure from which Satan tries to keep men away. Hence the necessity of seeking God's protection against Satan while beginning the recitation of the Quran lest worldly gains and

100. Surely, [a]he has no power over those who believe and who put *their* trust in their Lord.**1900**

اِنَّهٗ لَيۡسَ لَهٗ سُلۡطٰنٌ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ يَتَوَكَّلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

101. [b]His power is only over those who make friends with him and who set up equals to Him.**1901**

اِنَّمَا سُلۡطٰنُهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَهٗ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ بِهٖ مُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ ع ۱۳ ۱۹

R. 14.

102. And [c]when We bring one Sign in place of another—and Allah knows best what He reveals—they say, 'Thou art but a fabricator.' Nay, but most of them know not.**1902**

وَاِذَا بَدَّلۡنَاۤ اٰيَةً مَّكَانَ اٰيَةٍ ۙ وَّاللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَنۡتَ مُفۡتَرٍ ؕ بَلۡ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾

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[a]15:43; 17:66; 34:22. [b]2:258; 3:176; 7:28. [c]2:107.

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material comforts should make men oblivious of their great spiritual objectives.

1900. Commentary:

This verse gives the reason why it is necessary to seek God's protection against Satan. Satan can have no access to those who entrust their affairs to God. Such persons are beyond his approach. Those who call God to their help need have no fear of him. This means that seeking God's protection is a form of trust in Him.

1901. Commentary:

According to this verse Satan can exercise his influence only on those who make friends with him. Those who seek the protection of God against him declare him to be their enemy, and so they get beyond his control. The verse incidentally proves that v. 99 did not refer to the Holy Prophet as is wrongly assumed by some. Satan could not possibly have power over him.

1902. Commentary:

Before proceeding to explain this verse it is necessary to understand the real meaning of the word اية which, primarily means "a sign". Unless there is something in the context to show that a word is taken in any of its secondary senses, we must take it in its primary sense. The verses of the Quran are called ايات (signs) because every one of them constitutes a sign of guidance. The preceding verses spoke of the punishments which were in store for disbelievers. This fact lends support to the view that the word اية is here used in its original sense, viz. in the sense of a sign. Now the fulfilment of the prophecies of punishment depends on the attitude of those concerning whom they are made. If they are obstinate and persist in rejecting the signs of God, the threatened punishment overtakes them. But if they show repentance it is averted, deferred or delayed, for God is Merciful and His attribute of Mercy predominates over all His other attributes. The case of the people of Jonah is a well-known instance for understanding the nature and purpose of the prophecies of punishment. Jonah predicted destruction of the people of Nineveh, but they repented and renounced their evil ways. So God had mercy on them and averted the impending punishment (10:99), and in place of the sign of punishment, He showed a sign of mercy. On such occasions, i.e. when God averts or delays a predicted punishment in consonance with His attribute of Mercy, the sons of darkness accuse their Prophet of falsehood and declare that his prophecy has not been fulfilled. These critics conveniently ignore the fact that there is a vast difference between a promise and a threat. If a person does not keep his promise, he is rightly regarded as guilty of breach of a solemn undertaking but if he does not carry into actual effect his threat, he cannot be accused of any breach of promise. On the contrary, it will be regarded as an act of generosity and kindness on his part not to have done so. According to Arabic idiom also, whereas the non-fulfilment of a promise is called a breach of promise, the non-fulfilment of threat is regarded as an act of generosity. The Arabs say الخلف فى الوعد عند العرب كذب وفى الوعيد كرم i.e. the breach of promise is a lie but the non-fulfilment of a threat is an act of generosity. God is Merciful, and if a person repents, His Mercy demands that punishment should be averted from him, and in such a case it will be foolish to accuse the Prophet of falsehood. The words, *and Allah knows best what He reveals*, mean that God knows best what kind of sign is required to be shown under particular circumstances. He shows His signs according to the requirements of the time. If He sees that disbelievers have given up their evil course and are penitent, He refrains from punishing them and changes the form of the sign. In that case the threat of punishment is not carried out, and under such circumstances it is foolish to accuse the Prophet of falsehood. So the expression واذا بدلنا اية مكان اية would mean, When We avert or delay punishment on account of a change for the better on the part of those who are threatened with such punishment…

Taking the word اية in the sense of Law, this expression would mean that when in certain matters the Law of Islam is found to differ from Laws previously revealed, disbelievers regard it as evidence of the Quran's being a forgery. This meaning is in perfect harmony with the context. It is argued that when the Quran declares previous Laws to have been revealed by God, it should not have differed from them. But the admission that previous Laws have

103. Say, [a]The Spirit of Holiness has brought it down from thy Lord with truth, that He may strengthen those who believe, and [b]as a guidance and glad tidings for Muslims.'**1903**

قُلْ نَزَّلَهٗ رُوْحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ
لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهُدًى وَّبُشْرٰى
لِلْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۝۱۰۳

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[a]2:98; 26:194. [b]10:38; 12:112.

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been revealed by God does not mean that none of their ordinances could be replaced by new ordinances. According to the Quran, the previous Laws were meant for particular peoples and for particular times. They were suited only to the requirements of the peoples for whom they were revealed. The Quran, on the other hand, constitutes a universal Law, meant for all peoples and all times, and therefore if it is found to contain certain teachings which differ from the teachings of previously revealed Scriptures, that is no evidence of the Quran's being a forgery. On the other hand, it is but natural and necessary that the perfect and universal Law—the Quran—should differ in some of its ordinances from temporary and provisional Laws previously revealed.

It must be clearly understood that the verse contains no reference to the abrogation of any of the verses of the Quran. The Holy Prophet has not been reported to have ever declared any verse of the Quran to have been abrogated by another verse. Nor are there any verses in the Quran which clash with other parts of the Book and which may therefore have to be regarded as abrogated. All parts of the Quran support and corroborate one another. Moreover, there is nothing in the context to suggest any reference to the abrogation theory.

It is also worth remembering that the passage under comment was revealed in Mecca. In fact, the whole *Sūrah* belongs to the Meccan period. And the *Sūrahs* of the Meccan period deal with teachings pertaining to morals and matters of belief, and about these there can be no question of abrogation or revocation.

1903. Commentary:

The verse continues the theme of the previous verse and in fact constitutes an argument in favour of the non-fulfilment of the prophecy of punishment. It purports to say that the medium through which the Quran has been sent is the Holy Spirit and not an angel of destruction. Therefore the object of the prophecies revealed is reformation and not destruction. So, if a person or persons, regarding whom prophecies of punishment are made, repent, the decree of God is changed accordingly, for the real object of prophecies is the material and spiritual well-being of the people, and God's decrees are fulfilled in the way in which that object is best served.

As for changes in previous Laws, they too are made through the Holy

104. And indeed We know that they say that it is only a man who teaches him. *But* the tongue of him to whom they *unjustly* incline *in making this insinuation* is foreign, while this is Arabic tongue, plain and clear.[1904]

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهٗ بَشَرٌ ؕ لِسَانُ الَّذِيْ يُلْحِدُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّهٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۰۴﴾

Spirit and consequently what we have to see is whether the changes made are for the better and whether they satisfy human reason and conscience and lead to success and happiness. If the new teachings conduce to the improvement of the spiritual condition of the people, they should be accepted as heavenly teachings and should not be criticized and rejected.

1904. Important Words:

يلحدون (they unjustly incline in making this insinuation) is derived from لحد. They say لحد الميت i.e. he buried the corpse. لحدالسهم عن الهدف means, the arrow deviated from the target. الحد الى فلان means, he inclined towards such a one. They say الحد فى الدين i.e. he deviated or swerved from the right way with respect to religion; he impugned religion. الحد فى الحرم means, he desecrated the *ḥaram* and violated its sanctity. The Quranic expression لسان الذى يلحدون اليه means, the tongue of him unto whom they incline (Lane & Aqrab).

اعجمى (foreign) is derived from عجم (*'ajama*) which means, he bit it: and he chewed it. عجم (*'ajuma*) means, he had an impotence or an impediment or a difficulty in his speech or utterance and a want of clearness, chasteness, or correctness therein. They say اعجم الكلام i.e. he made the speech or language to want or be without or to have a quality the contrary of clearness, perspicuousness or distinctness or to want or be without chasteness or correctness. اعجم الكتاب means, he dotted the book or pointed it or he removed its want of clearness by means of diacritical points. The Arabs say, اعجم الباب i.e. he closed the door. عجم means, foreigners as meaning others than Arabs; such as are not Arabs, especially Persians. عجمى signifies one who is of the race of the عجم though he may be chaste or correct in Arabic speech. قوم اعجم means, a people not of the Arabs. اعجم means, one having an impotence or impediment or difficulty in speech though he may be clear, perspicuous, chaste or correct in speaking a foreign language; and not clear, perspicuous, chaste or correct in speaking Arabic though he may be an Arab; and اعجمى signifies the same, (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

Names of different persons have been mentioned in the traditions from whom disbelievers alleged the Holy

Prophet received help in composing the Quran. According to some reports, it was a Christian slave named Jabr, who read the Christian Scriptures while making swords. The Prophet used to go and sit with him. According to another report, it was ‘Aish or Ya‘īsh, a servant of al-Ḥuwaiṭib Ibn ‘Abdul-‘Uzzā, who knew the previous Scriptures and had embraced Islam and held firmly to the Faith. According to yet another report a slave named Abū Fuqaih who was also known as Yasār and was a Jew assisted the Holy Prophet in preparing the Quran. He was subjected to much persecution for his adoption of Islam and probably died sometime before the Hijrah. Again, ‘Abdullah bin Muslim al-Ḥaḍramī is reported to have said that his two Christian slaves named Yasār and Jabr, natives of ‘Ain at-Tamar, followed the trade of sword-cutters at Mecca. They used to read the Gospels while engaged in their work. When the Holy Prophet passed by their shop and saw them reading the Gospels he would stop there for a while. A report says that when one of them was asked whether he taught Muḥammad the Bible he replied, ‘No, but he teaches me.’ Ibn ‘Abbās reports that the Holy Prophet gave instruction in Islam to a Roman slave named Bal‘ām. The Quraish taunted the Prophet that he learned many things from him. The same is said of ‘Adas or ‘Addās, a slave of Ausa bin Rabī (Ma‘ānī & Fatḥ). The names of sundry other persons have also been mentioned from whom the Prophet was alleged by the Quraish to have received help, among them being ‘Ammār and Ṣuhaib. The names of Salmān, the Persian, and of ‘Abdullah bin Salām and of the Nestorian monk, Sergius, who according to Mas‘ūdī is the well-known Buḥairah, have also been mentioned in this connection.

From the verse under comment, it appears that Meccans accused the Prophet of receiving help from a certain person in preparing the Quran and the verse answers the allegation by saying, *But the tongue of him to whom they unjustly incline in making this insinuation is foreign, while this is Arabic tongue, plain and clear.* The Christian critics say that this answer is irrelevant, for, as Arnold says: "admitting they were foreigners, they might nevertheless supply him with material" (Sherr’s Commentary of the Bible). It was the necessary material or subject matter, they allege, with which the foreigners supplied the Prophet and to say in reply that the tongue of the person who was alleged to teach him was not Arabic betrayed the irrelevancy of the answer. But these reverend gentlemen seem conveniently to ignore the patent fact that this was not the only objection with which the Quran was assailed. It has not hesitated to mention many other similar objections of disbelievers and has refuted them thoroughly. If the Quran could successfully rebut so many other objections of disbelievers, it could answer this one also. In fact it has adequately done so even in the verse under comment, but the reverend gentlemen themselves have not been able to understand the answer.

Moreover, if the reply given in the Quran was so manifestly irrelevant as Christian critics pretend to find it, why did not the Meccans of the Prophet's times who first made this objection, failed to detect this manifest irrelevancy and why did they not express their dissatisfaction with the answer? But not the slightest reference is to be found in any tradition to this so-called irrelevancy of this answer of the Quran. If Meccans had signified their dissatisfaction with this answer and had pointed out its absurdity and irrelevancy, the traditions would have mentioned it as they have mentioned so many other incidents calculated to impugn the Quran and render its position apparently indefensible.

The fact is that these critics themselves have not understood the objection. The traditions quoted above bring to light two objections of the Meccans. One was that Christian and Jewish slaves who had been converted to Islam secretly helped the Holy Prophet in composing the Quran. They furnished him with the necessary material which was subsequently rendered into Arabic. The other was that he listened to certain non-Muslim slaves while they recited the Gospels and incorporated into the Quran what he heard from them.

Thus Meccans made two objections. One of these the Quran has answered in this verse, while the other has been answered in vv. 25:5, 6, 7. This second objection along with its answer runs thus: *And the disbelievers say, It is nothing but a lie which he has forged and at which other people have assisted him. But they have been guilty of a great injustice and have uttered an untruth. And they say: These are legends of the ancients; he has got them written down and they are dictated to him morning and evening, Nay, He Who knows the secrets in the heavens and the earth has revealed it. He truly is Most Forgiving and Merciful.* The difference between these verses and the verse under comment is quite manifest. In the verse under comment disbelievers refer to a single man as having taught the Holy Prophet, while in *Sūrah* 25, it is not one man but many who are alleged, by disbelievers, to have assisted him in writing the Quran. To both these allegations different answers suiting the nature of the allegations have been given. Thus it is clear that Meccans had made two distinct and separate objections and both these have been answered in the Quran at different places, and traditions support this conclusion. It was with regard to several of the slave converts to Islam that it was alleged that they furnished material to the Prophet. To this allegation of the Meccans, chapter 25 refers in the words, *at which other people have assisted him.* From the same chapter it also appears that those who were alleged to have assisted the Prophet were Muslims, for the passage in question says: *They are dictated to him morning and evening*. Now it is an historical fact that while at Mecca Muslims assembled in the morning and evening in the house of Arqam for prayers and sat round the Holy

Prophet with doors closed in order to avoid interference by disbelievers. Disbelievers alleged that the meetings were held to compose the Quran in secret, when the slave converts from Judaism and Christianity would tell the old histories of their religions, and the Prophet would have these accounts written down by his Companions. This is how disbelievers declared the Quran to be a forgery which was prepared by many persons, incidentally admitting by implication that a work of the unique excellence of the Quran could not be prepared by one man. Some Christian critics even in our own time have identified themselves with this allegation and have the hardihood to suggest that the letters with which some of the chapters of the Quran begin are the initial letters of the names of the Companions who composed them.

The objection gives rise to two inevitable questions: (a) whether those slave converts who were alleged to have assisted the Holy Prophet in writing the Quran were so learned and intelligent as to teach the Prophet what they were alleged to have taught him and (b) whether the Quran is a human production.

It is not difficult to find answers to both these questions. It does not require extraordinary intelligence to understand that those who helped the Prophet in producing and preparing the Quran and to whom he was indebted for what the Quran contained could not believe it to be the word of God and could not, for his sake, undergo willingly those inhuman cruelties and tyrannies which they suffered at the hands of disbelievers. Could these accomplices of the Holy Prophet in forging the Quran possibly endure the most cruel persecution for believing in a book which they themselves had fabricated? Are these Christian critics unaware of the persecution which these so-called forgers of the Quran bore without wavering and flinching?

With regard to the second question, viz. whether those great truths which are alleged to have been taught to the Prophet by the slave converts could possibly have been taught by them, the Quran says that what are spoken of as 'the legends of the ancients' and what are represented as being taught by the slave converts from Judaism and Christianity are not legends but great truths and mighty prophecies which have been made by Him 'Who knows the secrets in the heavens and the earth, and which it is beyond the power of any mortal to foretell'.

Now, if the objection mentioned in the verse under comment was the same as had been quoted and answered in 25:5-7 (which by common consent was revealed before the present *Sūrah*) viz. that some other persons had supplied the Prophet with material, the same convincing answer should have been given here also. But the answer given here is quite different from the one given in chapter 25. This shows that the objection referred to in the verse under comment has not been understood by these critics of the Quran. The present verse does not refer to the objection that a certain man provided material for the Quran. It refers to the second allegation of disbelievers viz. that the Prophet incorporated into the Quran what he heard from the Christian slave when the latter read the Gospels at his shop. The tradition says that there were two Christian slaves, Jabr and Yasār, who worked as sword-cutters at Mecca and read the Gospels at their shop and, when the Prophet passed by them, he used to stop there and listen to them. But on closer scrutiny it appears that really there was only one slave, Jabr, who was alleged to teach the Prophet. Another tradition, to which reference has already been made, supports this view and gives the name of Jabr only. Yet another tradition tells us that only one of the two Christian sword-cutters was asked whether he taught the Prophet, and he replied that, far from his teaching the Prophet, it was the Prophet who taught him. This not only shows that it was only one slave who read the Gospels, but also throws light on the purpose for which the Prophet sometimes stopped at his shop. He did not stop there to learn but to teach the man whom he considered to be religious-minded.

It has now been clearly established that the Quran refers to two objections of disbelievers, one relating to certain slave converts from whom the Prophet is alleged to have received help in preparing the Quran which is mentioned in chapter 25 and the other relating to what he heard of the Gospels from Jabr and incorporated in the Quran.

This second objection has been answered in the verse under comment. The verse purports to say that the tongue of him to whom they attribute the teaching of the Prophet being اعجمی i.e. foreign and defective, he could not impart to the Prophet in his faulty Arabic those great and eternal truths for explaining which the possession of sound and deep knowledge of Arabic was essential.

Other pertinent questions which arise here are, did the slave in question read an Arabic version of the Gospels and were the Gospels translated into Arabic in the Prophet's time and were the Arabic versions so common that even slaves read them while working at their workshops? The original language of the Gospels was, according to Muslims, Hebrew, and according to Christians, Greek. If the existence of an Arabic version of the Bible in the time of the Prophet cannot be proved, it would follow that the slave in question read either a Hebrew or a Greek version. But if he read a Hebrew or a Greek Gospel, the question arises, how was the Prophet able to understand him, since he did not know either of these languages? Hence in order to understand the significance of the verse under comment, it has to be seen whether the Gospels had been translated into Arabic at the time of the Holy Prophet. That they had not been translated into Arabic is clear from the following facts:

Up to the time of the Prophet translations of the Gospels had not been made in any language. It was in the 13th or 14th centuries of the Christian era that the Gospels first began to be translated into other languages. The study of the Commentaries of the Quran by Muslim scholars also shows that Arabic versions of the Bible were not available to them, because when in their Commentaries they quote the New or the Old Testament they make very serious mistakes. They ascribe to these books stories which are not found in them. This clearly shows that Arabic versions of the Bible did not exist in their time, otherwise they would not have made such blunders.

Traditions also show that in the time of the Holy Prophet the Gospels were to be found only in Hebrew or Greek. In Bukhārī we have the following about Waraqah bin Naufal; "He had become Christian in the days of ignorance and he used to write the Gospels in Hebrew." True, another tradition gives Arabic in place of Hebrew, as the language in which Waraqah wrote the Gospels but preference must be given to the tradition quoted from Bukhārī because if the Arabic versions of the Bible could be available in the days of the Prophet many Muslims would have read them. But no such scholars of the Bible among early Muslims were to be found. We are even inclined to the view that the reporter had, by mistake, substituted the word "Hebrew" for "Greek" in the above tradition, because only Greek versions were current in those days and Hebrew versions had almost ceased to exist. That the Christian Scriptures had not been translated into Arabic by the time of the Prophet receives further support from the fact that even the Jewish tribes of Medina had not translated the Torah into Arabic by that time, and whenever he needed a reference to this book, he consulted ‘Abdullah bin Salām, a great Hebrew scholar. This view is also supported by the following testimony of a well-known Christian writer, Dr. Alexander Souter, M.A., LL.D., who writes in his book, "The Text and Canon of the New Testament" (Second Edition, 1925 p. 74), under the head, 'Arabic Versions': "These come partly and directly from Greek, and partly through Syriac and partly through Coptic. Mohammad himself knew the Gospel story only orally. The oldest manuscript goes no further back than the 8th century. Two versions of the Arabic are reported to have taken place at Alexandria in the 13th century." In short, there is no doubt about the fact that the Gospels had not been translated into Arabic at the time of the Prophet and those who had to consult them used the Greek or Hebrew version.

Thus it is clear that when Jabr, the Christian slave, read the Gospels, he must have read the Greek or the Hebrew version. And how could the Holy Prophet benefit by listening to a book in a language which he did not understand? The fact seems to be that when disbelievers saw the Prophet standing at Jabr’s shop they imagined that he must have learnt something from him. The Quran removes these doubts by saying, *the tongue of him to whom they unjustly incline in making this insinuation is foreign, while this is Arabic tongue plain and clear,* meaning that the man from whom the Prophet was alleged to have received material for the Quran must have read the book in Hebrew or Greek because his "tongue being foreign" he could not explain to the Holy Prophet in his defective Arabic those great truths which the Quran comprises. But the Prophet knew only Arabic and so he could not follow him, much less incorporate in the Quran what he heard from him.

In short, disbelievers brought two distinct charges against the Prophet. First, that he listened to a Christian slave while the latter read the Gospels at his workshop, and incorporated into the Quran what he heard from him. Secondly, that he received help from those slaves who had been converted to Islam from Judaism and Christianity and who met him in secret in the house of Arqam. Both these objections have been separately answered by the Quran, the first in the verse under comment and the second in 25:5-7.

It would be of some use to mention here the following facts which are relevant to the objections stated above.

1. The Quran has either abrogated or improved upon the teachings of former Scriptures. The Holy Prophet must have derived the knowledge of the teachings of those Scriptures from the same source—from God—from which he had derived the knowledge of the new teachings of the Quran which have supplanted previous Scriptures.

2. It has condemned some of the fundamental teachings of Christianity and has improved upon others. There is no known Christian sect with which it has not disagreed on one point or other. Now it is for Christian critics to say to which sect that man who is supposed to have "taught" the Holy Prophet belonged and how he could teach him things which were against his own beliefs. Certainly the Prophet's so-called helpers could not have helped him in abrogating the teachings of their own religious Scriptures.

3. It has corrected many Biblical statements. For instance, it declares that Aaron did not take part in the worship of the calf. It clears David, Solomon and Noah of the sinful acts ascribed to them in the Bible. These are facts to the truth of which even Christian writers have had to bear witness today when more than 1350 years have passed since these truths were, for the first time, proclaimed by the Quran. Surely, no Christian slave could teach the Prophet these historical truths.

4. The Quran has made some very important prophecies with regard to some of the events mentioned in the Bible. No Jewish or Christian sect had any knowledge of them. But their truth has now come to light. For instance, the Quran states that God preserved the body of Pharaoh so that it might be a sign for the generations to come. No Christian slave could impart this knowledge to the Prophet.

5. It appears from the traditions that the Holy Prophet used to visit Jabr's shop in the fourth or fifth year of the Call, when he was boycotted by Meccans. But chapters 18, 19, 20 and

105. *As for* those who do not believe in the Signs of Allah, surely, Allah will not guide them, and they shall have a grievous punishment.[1905]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۙ
لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ١٠٥

106. It is only those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, that forge falsehood, and they it is who are the liars.[1906]

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ١٠٦

107. [a]Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed—save him who is forced *thereto* while his heart finds peace in the faith—but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is Allah's wrath; and

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ
أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَٰكِنْ
مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ
غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ١٠٧

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[a] 3:91; 4:138; 63:4.

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25 of the Quran which deal with Jews and Christians had been revealed before that time. Ibn Mas'ūd who was one of very early converts to Islam says that chapters 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 belong to the early Meccan period (Bukhārī, *Kitābut-Tafsīr*). All these *Sūrahs* abound in facts relating to Jews and Christians. How could the Prophet know these facts if the source of his information was the Christian slave, Jabr, the sword-cutter of Mecca?

1905. Commentary:

The verse means to say that disbelievers bring forward only silly objections. In spite of many powerful and clear signs having been shown to them they find fault with the sublime teachings of the Quran. They cannot be expected to follow the true guidance and will therefore suffer grievous punishment on account of their going astray from the path which leads to eternal bliss and happiness.

1906. Commentary:

The verse draws attention to the noble life of the Holy Prophet and adduces it as evidence of the fact that he could not possibly ascribe to God what he learnt from men. Only such persons, it says, as have no faith in God and are perverse can be guilty of such forgeries. But the Prophet is doing his best to establish God's glory on earth and not only himself glorifies God but bids others do the same. Only a black-hearted man can accuse such a noble person of forgery.

they shall have a severe punishment.**1907**

108. [a]That is because they have preferred the present life to the Hereafter, and because Allah guides not the disbelieving people.**1908**

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اسۡتَحَبُّوا الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا
عَلَى الۡاٰخِرَةِ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى
الۡقَوۡمَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾

109. [b]It is they on whose hearts and ears and eyes Allah has set a seal. And it is they who are the heedless.**1909**

اُولٰٓـئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ
وَسَمۡعِهِمۡ وَاَبۡصَارِهِمۡ ۚ وَاُولٰٓـئِكَ هُمُ
الۡغٰفِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾

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[a]10:8; 87:17. [b]2:8; 4:156; 7:180.

1907. Commentary:

With this verse the Quran reverts to the main theme of the *Sūrah*, viz. that the day of the glory of Islam is about to dawn but Muslims will have to suffer great trials and tribulations to deserve it. They are warned that if anyone of them recanted under these trials, he would draw upon himself the wrath of God. But a person who is inwardly satisfied with Islam and only under very severe compulsion is constrained to utter words which may appear to express disbelief, may not be punished for such an expression of disbelief. But this does not mean that cowardice is condoned or that such a person will be altogether pardoned. Cowardice and true belief cannot go together. The verse holds out no Divine pardon to a coward. It is indeed silent about him which implies that final judgement in the case of such persons has been reserved and that their future behaviour will determine the nature of the treatment they will receive from God.

The words, *who is forced thereto*, may refer to Jabr or 'Ammār bin Yāsir but preferably to the former.

1908. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that as the Quran is the revealed word of God and contains nothing but truth, dissatisfaction with its teaching can never be the cause of its rejection. It must be due to expediency, the consideration of worldly interests or mental perversion of the rejecter. But the disbeliever rejects it to his own cost.

1909. Commentary:

The verse goes on to say that rejecters of the Quran sacrifice truth to paltry material gains and all their energies are directed to the attainment of worldly objects. And as they do not make use of their God-given faculties for their spiritual

110. [a]Undoubtedly, it is they who will be the losers in the Hereafter.1910

لَاجَرَمَ اَنَّهُمۡ فِی الۡاٰخِرَۃِ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾

111. [b]Then, surely, thy Lord—to those who fled *their homes* after they had been persecuted and then struggled hard *in the cause of Allah* and remained steadfast—*aye*, surely, after that thy Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.1911

ثُمَّ اِنَّ رَبَّکَ لِلَّذِیۡنَ هَاجَرُوۡا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا فُتِنُوۡا ثُمَّ جٰهَدُوۡا وَ صَبَرُوۡۤا ۙ اِنَّ رَبَّکَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهَا لَغَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ ع

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[a]11:23. [b]2:219.

advancement, these faculties become rusted and corroded through disuse.

1910. Commentary:

Such people who reject the word of God only for the sake of the paltry gains of this world and not on account of honest doubts and misgivings are guilty of a serious crime. They will be humiliated and disgraced in this life and will suffer a severe punishment in the life to come.

1911. Commentary:

Verses 108-110 referred to those who open their hearts to disbelief and are the avowed enemies of Islam. The verse under comment deals with those persons regarding whom judgement had been reserved in v. 107, viz. persons whose hearts are satisfied with truth, but who are forced to utter words which are apparently expressive of disbelief. The judgement given in their case is that if they migrate from their homes and strive in the cause of God and endure with patience any hardships that may befall them in the way of religion, then, and not till then, will God pardon their previous sins, for only then will it become established that they have made full amends for their past lapses. In v. 107, such persons were excepted from those who had opened their minds to disbelief. In the face of such hard conditions for securing Divine pardon, it is the height of injustice on the part of the critics of Islam to say that it condones the concealment of one's faith or the denial of truth when one is confronted with trials and hardships. In fact, God demands a life-long sacrifice from such a person before admitting him again to His Grace and Mercy. The example of Ṭulaiḥah bin Khuwailad may be cited in this connection. When after having renegaded and laid claim to prophethood he became reconverted to Islam in the Caliphate of 'Umar, the latter forgave him on condition that he would spend the remainder of his life in jihad.

R. 15.

112. *On* the day when every soul will come pleading for itself, and [a]every soul will be fully recompensed for what it did, and they will not be wronged.1912

يَوْمَ تَأْتِيْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَنْ نَّفْسِهَا
وَتُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ
لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾

113. [b]And Allah sets forth *for you* the parable of a city which enjoyed security and peace; its provisions came to it in plenty from every quarter; but it denied the favours of Allah, so Allah made it taste hunger and fear *which clothed it* like a garment because of what they used to do.1913

وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ اٰمِنَةً
مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَّأْتِيْهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ
مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِاَنْعُمِ اللّٰهِ فَاَذَاقَهَا اللّٰهُ
لِبَاسَ الْجُوْعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾

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[a]2:282. [b]34:16-17.

1912. Commentary:

This verse is complementary to the previous one and both should be read together. It means that the forgiveness and mercy of the Forgiving and Merciful God will cover those persons on the Day of Judgement who sincerely repent of their past lapses and whose repentance takes the form of the noble deeds mentioned in the previous verse. The verse also hints that God will forgive them if they continue to strive in the cause of truth and endure all trials with patience till the time of their death.

1913. Commentary:

The "city" referred to in this verse is Mecca. It warns Meccans of the great punishment which will befall them if they do not accept the Holy Prophet and do not give up their iniquitous ways. The sanctity of Mecca would not save them from the impending punishment. They are also told that they are leading a life of plenty and security, but the time is fast approaching when they will be visited with a terrible famine or, to quote a prayer of the Holy Prophet, with "years of famine like the famine of the days of Joseph", and instead of security they will taste the horrors of war. Both these calamities befell the Meccans after the Hijrah. They were smitten with constant fear. Fear is the inevitable result of war and they became involved in continuous fighting. And such a dreadful famine

114. And indeed there has come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they treated him as a liar, so punishment overtook them while they were wrongdoers.[1914]

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ
فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾

115. [a]So eat of the lawful *and* good things which Allah has provided for you; and be grateful for the bounty of Allah, if it is Him you worship.[1915]

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۪
وَّاشْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ
تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾

116. [b]He has made unlawful for you only that which dies of itself and blood and the flesh of swine and that on which the name of any other than Allah

اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ
الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَاۤ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ
اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ

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[a]2:169; 5:89; 8:70. [b]2:174; 5:4; 6:146.

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overtook Mecca that Abū Sufyān, the archenemy of Islam, came to Medina to beg the Prophet to pray to God that He might have mercy on them and save them from the famine. The words, *which clothed it like a garment,* mean that God afflicted Mecca with fear and hunger to such an extent that these calamities altogether covered it and stuck to it like a garment. Marks of fear and hunger became clearly visible on the faces of Meccans. Famine made them lean and thin and continuous fear overwhelmed them and completely unnerved them.

1914. Commentary:

The verse further makes it clear that the parable of the previous verse applied to the Meccans who made themselves deserving of Divine punishment because they rejected the Prophet who was from among them and whom they knew to be truthful, sincere and honest.

1915. Commentary:

In the preceding two verses the disbelievers of Mecca were threatened with hunger and fear and in the present verse the Faithful are promised security and plenty. The verse further points out that whereas disbelievers used all sorts of means—good or bad—to earn wealth, the earnings of the Faithful would be good and lawful, and because their lives would be free from fear and anxiety, the food they eat would help their physical and mental growth.

has been invoked. But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, then surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.[1916]

رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٦﴾

117. [a]And say not—because of the falsehood which your tongues utter—'This is lawful, and this is unlawful,' so as to forge a lie against Allah. Surely, those who forge a lie against Allah do not prosper.[1917]

وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَا تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هٰذَا حَلٰلٌ وَّ هٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ۭ﴿١١٧﴾

118. [b]*It is* a brief enjoyment, and *then* they shall have a grievous punishment.[1918]

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ۠ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٨﴾

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[a]6:145. [b]3:198; 4:78.

1916. Commentary:

See notes on vv. 2:169,174; 5:4; 6:119,120 & 146.

1917. Commentary:

The opening sentence of the verse may have two interpretations: (a) "and say not on the basis of the falsehood which your tongues utter that this is lawful and this is unlawful"; (b) "and say not about the things which your tongues have falsely declared as lawful or unlawful that this is lawful and this is unlawful". The words "your tongues" mean, "the tongues of the chiefs of people", because it is the leaders who first utter lies; the common people only follow and imitate them.

The verse means to say that it is the exclusive prerogative of God to declare things lawful or unlawful and that if disbelievers do not desist from declaring things lawful or unlawful at will, they will end by forging lies against God. The words, *those who forge a lie against Allah do not prosper,* embody an infallible criterion by which the truth of a Prophet of God can be tested. A false claimant is a forger of lies against God and such a one can never succeed in his mission.

1918. Commentary:

False claimants to Divine revelation may enjoy a limited respite but their life is sure to be cut short and before they have made any headway, they die an ignominious death. According to the Quran a person who falsely claims to have received Divine revelation and to have been entrusted with a Divine mission cannot enjoy a long respite—much less the period

119. And to those *also* who are Jews, We forbade before *this* all that We have related to thee. And [a]We wronged them not, but they used to wrong themselves.**1919**

وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا
عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ
كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۹﴾

120. Then surely, [b]thy Lord—to those who do evil in ignorance and repent thereafter and make amends—*aye*, surely, after that thy Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.**1920**

ثُمَّ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السُّوْٓءَ
بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْٓا ۙ
اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ ع ۱۵ ۹ ۲۱

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[a]11:102; 16:34. [b]4:18; 6:55.

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which the Holy Prophet lived after he laid claim to prophethood.

1919. Commentary:

The verse warns Muslims that, like idolaters, the Jews also made lawful things unlawful and *vice versa*, and for this unlawful act they were punished by God, so they (the Muslims) should be on their guard against following their bad example.

The word "before" in the sentence *We forbade before this all*...refers to v. 116 above. The words, *but they used to wrong themselves,* signify that some other things such as the flesh of the cow and the fat of the goat were forbidden to them. But the prohibition was temporary and was prescribed as a punishment to the Jews for having made lawful for themselves things which God had made unlawful for them.

1920. Commentary:

The preceding verse said that Jews were punished for their disobedience. The present verse says if even now they repent and reform themselves, God will forgive them their past sins and once again shower upon them spiritual blessings of which they had become deprived on account of their disobedience. The expression بجهالة means both lack of knowledge and lack of spiritual realization. Here it is used in the second sense because there is no justification in punishing a person who does not possess knowledge of a commandment for the non-observance of which he is punished. The verse means to say that the Jews possessed requisite knowledge of the commandments which they were expected to observe but they broke those commandments not because of lack of knowledge, but because they did not fear God and were devoid of spiritual realization. This shows that the possession of both knowledge and spiritual realization is essential, for knowledge alone is no great help.

R. 16.

121. Abraham was indeed a paragon of virtue, [a]obedient to Allah, ever inclined *to Him*, and he was not of those who set up equals *to God*;**1921**

اِنَّ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ كَانَ اُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلّٰهِ حَنِيۡفًا ؕ وَلَمۡ يَكُ مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ۙ

122. Grateful for His favours; [b]He chose him and guided him

شَاكِرًا لِّاَنۡعُمِهٖ ؕ اِجۡتَبٰىهُ وَهَدٰىهُ اِلٰى

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[a]2:136; 3:68; 6:80. [b]2:131.

It may also be mentioned here that جهالة (ignorance) is of two kinds, viz. (a) permanent ignorance, the victim of which rushes headlong into sin and derives a sort of pleasure in indulging in it; such a one is completely devoid of Divine realization; and (b) temporary ignorance, when his lapses are due to a temporary loss of true and living faith and to his realization being defective. See also 4:18, & 6:55.

1921. Important Words:

امة (a paragon of virtue) is derived from ام which means, he betook himself to it, aimed at, sought after or pursued it. امة means, a way, course, mode or manner of acting; religion; a nation, a people, a race, a tribe; family; the followers of a Prophet; a generation of men or people of one time; a righteous man who is an object of imitation; one who is known for goodness; a man combining all kinds of good qualities; a learned man; one who has no equal; the learned man of his age or time who is singular in his learning, etc. See also 11:9 & 6:39.

Commentary:

In this verse the Quran exhorts Muslims not to follow the example of idolaters and Jews but to take Abraham as their model. The word امة (a paragon of virtue) is here used in two senses: (a) a righteous man who is an object of imitation; (b) a man combining in him all good qualities. The word, as shown under Important Words, also means "a people", and Abraham has been called "a people" because through him a great people came into being. He is called "a people" in the sense in which a small off-shoot is called the tree that is to spring from it.

The words, *He was not of those who set up equals to God*, signify that although Abraham combined in himself all the good qualities and excellences, yet the combination of these good qualities did not engender in him conceit or egotism. He did not consider the good qualities he possessed to be the result of his own effort or merit, but of God's special favour. Thus he was a monotheist in the real sense of the word. He allowed no idol of conceit or pride, etc., to stand between him and his Creator.

to a straight path.1922

صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۱۲۲﴾

123. And [a]We bestowed on him good in this world, and in the Hereafter he will surely be among the righteous.1923

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ؕ وَاِنَّهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ ؕ

124. And *now* We have revealed to thee, *saying*, [b]'Follow the way of Abraham *who was* ever inclined *to God* and was not of those who set up equals *to Him*.'1924

ثُمَّ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلَيْكَ اَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾

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[a] 2:131; 29:28. [b] 2:136; 4:126; 22:79.

1922. Commentary:

As Abraham believed that all his good qualities were Divine gifts, therefore he was grateful to God.

The straight path mentioned in the verse is the path which leads to God. The word مستقیم signifies the straight and shortest line between two points. Man represents one end of the line and God represents the other, and the straight and shortest path in religion is the line which joins man to God. The verse exhorts Muslims to develop in themselves the qualities that made Abraham the chosen one of God and to steer clear of the path of iniquity and transgression followed by Meccans and Jews. The former altogether rejected the Divine Law and were satisfied with man-made customs and usages and the latter differed and disagreed with regard to its meaning and application and defied and broke it.

1923. Commentary:

In verse 121 Abraham was mentioned as an exemplar. Here it is added that it cannot be said of him that because he did not possess material wealth, he had no reason or occasion to become corrupt. The verse removes this misconception and says that God had bestowed upon Abraham power, comfort and wealth and yet he stuck to the path of righteousness. It implies the beautiful hint that Muslims will also be granted worldly power, prestige and prosperity, and in the heyday of their glory would find in Abraham a worthy exemplar.

1924. Commentary:

The reason why Abraham has been held up as an exemplar is that he was held in high esteem not only by Jews and Christians but also by the idolaters of Arabia, being the common ancestor of all. The verse does not mean, as insinuated by some Christian writers, that according to it the Holy Prophet was merely a follower of the religion of Abraham and nothing more. The words,

125. [a]The *punishment for profaning the* Sabbath was imposed only on those who had differed about it, and [b]thy Lord will surely judge between them on the day of Resurrection about that in which they differed.**1925**

اِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبۡتُ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اخۡتَلَفُوۡا
فِيۡهِ ؕ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحۡكُمُ بَيۡنَهُمۡ يَوۡمَ
الۡقِيٰمَةِ فِيۡمَا كَانُوۡا فِيۡهِ يَخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾

126. Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and [c]argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, [d]thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way; and He knows those who are rightly guided.**1926**

اُدۡعُ اِلٰى سَبِيۡلِ رَبِّكَ بِالۡحِكۡمَةِ
وَالۡمَوۡعِظَةِ الۡحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلۡهُمۡ بِالَّتِىۡ
هِىَ اَحۡسَنُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ
بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ
بِالۡمُهۡتَدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾

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[a]2:66; 4:48,155. [b]3:56; 22:70. [c]41:35. [d]6:118.

"following the way of Abraham" only mean, following and imitating him in things mentioned in the preceding verse—he was a paragon of virtue and yet was humble and grateful to God. The Holy Prophet was by far a nobler character than Abraham and Islam a much better religious system than any previous one.

1925. Commentary:

The Jews believed that their national degradation and misery were due to their breaking the Sabbath and that they could regain their former high position and lost glory by re-establishing its sanctity. In some previous verses they had been invited to embrace Islam so that God might remove their present degradation and make them heirs to His special favours and blessings. But the Jews held firmly to the belief that their degradation was really due to their violation of the Sabbath and that their acceptance of Islam could not be of any avail to them. In the present verse they are told that before the advent of Islam they were punished for the breach of the Sabbath, the observance of which was a Divine command, but now that the old commandments with regard to Sabbath have been superseded by the new Dispensation—Islam—they could retrieve their departed glory only by accepting it and not by observing the Sabbath.

1926. Important Words:

The word حکمۃ translated as wisdom

in the text among other things means, (1) knowledge or science; (2) equity or justice; (3) forbearance or clemency; (4) firmness; (5) any saying or discourse conforming or agreeable to truth and in accordance with the exigencies of the occasion; (6) gift of prophecy; and (7) what prevents or restrains from ignorant behaviour (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The word may be used in all these senses in the verse under comment. Taking it in the sense of "knowledge" or "science", the verse would mean that Muslims should invite others to Islam by arguments based on knowledge and reason and should not confine themselves merely to making appeals to sentiments and emotions. Using it in the sense of "equity" or "justice", the injunction embodied would be that, when arguing with the followers of other Faiths, Muslim preachers and missionaries should not bring forward such objections against those Faiths as can be advanced against Islam itself for such a course is not only inconsistent with justice, but is also unsound. If حكمة be understood to mean "forbearance" or "clemency", the verse would mean that Muslims should explain the beauties of their religion with patience. Taking the word in the sense of "a saying or discourse conforming or agreeable to the truth, and in accordance with the exigencies of the occasion", the verse would mean, that while inviting other people to Islam Muslims should not say anything which is not true and is not in accordance with facts, for if they resorted to falsehood while preaching truth they would be ruining their own souls in order to save those of others. Moreover, their discourse should be conformable to the exigencies of the occasion and should not wound other people's susceptibilities. Taking the word in the sense of "gift of prophecy", the verse would mean that Muslims should invite men to Islam by using arguments contained in the Quran and not arguments which are the creation of their own fancy. Lastly, taking the word in the sense of "what restrains from ignorant behaviour" the verse would mean that the talk of Muslims should not be beyond the comprehension of those to whom the appeal is made. They should say things which may help to resolve the doubts of others and not display or demonstrate their own talents and learning.

The words, "goodly exhortation" mean "a discourse which softens the hearts of the hearers and makes a deep impression on them." Thus the Quran exhorts its followers not to content themselves with mere cold and dry reasoning but to reinforce and support philosophical dissertations with an appeal to sentiments. This appeal, however, should be "goodly exhortation" i.e. it should be based on pure truth and there should be no prevarication or tampering with facts.

The words, *and argue with them in a way that is best,* mean that while arguing we should make the most solid and unassailable argument we possess as the pivot round which all

127. [a]And if you *desire to* punish *the oppressors,* then punish *them* to the extent to which you have been wronged; [b]but if you show patience, then, surely, that is best for those who are patient.[1927]

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

128. And endure thou with patience; and verily thy patience is *possible* only with the help of Allah. [c]And grieve not for them,

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِيْ ضَيْقٍ

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[a]42:41. [b]42:44. [c]15:89, 98; 27:71.

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other arguments should revolve and which they should support.

The expression, *Thy Lord best knows those who have strayed from...who are rightly-guided,* contains a word of encouragement and good cheer for the Muslim evangelist. He is told that if in spite of his best efforts he finds that his preaching has not had the desired effect, he should not get discouraged and think that his preaching was defective, but should continue his noble work without slackening, leaving the result to God, because He alone knows who is deserving and destined to be guided to the right path.

As Islam was to spread abroad and was to be preached to the people who claimed to possess revealed Scriptures, Muslims have been told in this verse that a much more difficult task lay ahead of them. While dealing with idolaters it was easy enough to refute idolatry, but with respect to the "People of the Book" the excellence and superiority of Islamic teachings will have to be proved regarding details and auxiliary matters also. Hence the admonition given above.

1927. Commentary:

In this verse Muslims are told that when they preach Islam to other nations, the latter, instead of listening to them, will persecute and wage war against them. In such a contingency Muslims will have to take up arms in self-defence. But even when fighting in self-defence, they are not to exceed legitimate bounds, but punish the enemy only to the extent to which he has oppressed them. The word used here which implies the permission to fight and retaliate in self-defence is عاقبوا (punish). The root-meaning of this word is "to follow". The use of this word thus shows that Muslims can only fight in self-defence. jihad connotes fighting only in self-defence i.e. only after Muslims have been wantonly attacked. The Quran has taken care to explain the necessary conditions and limitations of jihad

nor feel distressed because of their plots.[1928]	مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ۝١٢٨
129. [a]Verily, Allah is with those who are righteous and those who do good.[1929]	اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا وَّالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مُّحْسِنُوْنَ ۝١٢٩ ع ١٦ ٩ ٢٢

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[a] 45:20.

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before permitting it.

1928. Commentary:

In this verse, the word صبر (patience) has been used in a sense different from that in which it has been used in the previous verse. When permission was given to Muslims to take up arms against disbelievers, the Holy Prophet realized that Divine punishment was about to overtake the latter. His heart became filled with pity for them and he was much grieved. So in this verse God has comforted him by saying that these people have made themselves deserving of punishment and therefore he should be resigned to God's decree.

This shows that the Prophet's heart was full of the milk of human kindness, even for those from whom he had received abuse and injury.

The verse also signifies that the Prophet's patience was not mere helpless and passive resignation to a condition which was beyond his control but was in perfect harmony with Divine decree, and it is only an act done under God's command that brings spiritual credit to the doer.

1929. Commentary:

This, the last verse of the *Sūrah*, implies the prophecy that Muslims shall eventually be victorious and their triumph and the defeat of their enemy will show that it was they, and not their opponents, who were righteous and the doers of good and consequently were the followers of the true path.

For an explanation of the words متقی (righteous) and محسن (who do good) see vv. 2:3 & 2:113. A متقی is one who establishes such a strong connection with God that He Himself becomes his Protector and shields him from every evil. A محسن is he who after he himself has come under the protection of God tries to bring others also under His protection. Thus a محسن possesses a higher spiritual stature than a متقی. The latter only himself becomes secure against sin, while the former devotes himself wholeheartedly to rescuing others from it. In fact, there are two classes of men: (a) those who make no effort to save others from a life of sin; (b) those who are anxious that others may be saved though they have no such thought for their own safety. God wants Muslims to be both متقی (righteous) and محسن (those who do good).

CHAPTER 17

BANĪ ISRĀ’ĪL

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Title and Date of Revelation

This chapter is known as Banī Isrā’īl because it deals with important incidents in the history of the Israelites and with the religious experiences through which they had to pass. It bears the title of *Isrā’* also because it begins with the Holy Prophet’s great vision about his Night Journey to Jerusalem which forms one of the most outstanding topics of this chapter.

According to some commentators the consensus of Muslim scholarly opinion regards this *Sūrah* as wholly Meccan (Muḥīṭ), but some other scholars think that vv. 2-8 are Medinite. Ibn Merdawaih reports Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair as saying that this chapter is of Meccan origin and was revealed very early in the Prophet’s ministry, in the third or fourth year of the Call. ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd is of the view that *Sūrahs* Banī Isrā’īl, Kahf and Maryam are among the chapters that were revealed very early (Bukhārī, *Kitāb Tafsīrul-Quran*). According to this Ḥadīth, the whole or a part of this *Sūrah* was revealed in the early years of the Call but it is not clear what ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd meant by the words "early years".

We are, however, inclined to the view that this chapter does not belong to the very early years of the Call. If ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd’s memory has not failed him, the revelation of this *Sūrah* was completed between the 4th and 11th year of the Call; otherwise, it was possibly revealed in the 10th or 11th year or even in the 12th year. Christian commentators of the Quran also assign to this *Sūrah* the period between the 6th and 12th years of the Call as the time of its revelation (Wherry). This view is of special significance inasmuch as, for their purpose of criticizing the Quran, a date after the Hijrah should have suited these Christian commentators better.

Connection with the Preceding *Sūrah*

In the preceding chapter Muslims were promised power and dominion. They were told that vast empires will come under their sway but that in the time of their glory and prosperity they should not behave like the Jews upon whom similar blessings were bestowed but who turned those blessings to wicked purposes and consigned God to oblivion, with the result that His wrath descended on them and they were destroyed (16:125). There subsists another beautiful connection between the closing verses of the preceding *Sūrah* and the opening verses of the present *Sūrah*. Towards the end of the previous *Sūrah* Muslims were warned that very soon they would meet with as severe opposition from the "People of the Book" as they had already experienced at the hands of Meccan idolaters but that they should bear it with patience and fortitude till God should give them complete victory over their opponents. In the present *Sūrah* their attention has been drawn to the fact that this opposition will start at Medina and will result in the total defeat and discomfiture of the "People of the Book" and in their sacred places ultimately falling into the hands of Muslims.

This *Sūrah* was revealed before its predecessor—An-Naḥl, but as in point of order and arrangement its subject matter should have followed that *Sūrah*, so when the time came for the Quran to be compiled in the form of a book, the Holy Prophet, in pursuance of Divine command, placed this *Sūrah* after An-Naḥl. The subject has already been dealt with at some length (see General Introduction) that the order in which the Quran was originally revealed was different from the order in which we find it today. As the temporary needs of its first addressees were not the same as the permanent needs and requirements of mankind at large and as it was a guide for the whole of humanity for all time, therefore the order in which it was revealed could not be the same as the order in which it was compiled in the form of a book for permanent use. It is indeed an outstanding miracle of the Quran that it was revealed in an order which was best suited for the needs of the period in which it was revealed, and was arranged for permanent use in another order which best suited the needs of mankind in subsequent times. Whereas every chapter of the Quran is quite complete in itself and is independent of other chapters as regards the subject with which it deals, there runs a deep and far-reaching connection among all the different chapters. This is because, when the Quran, as first revealed, its *Sūrahs* were revealed in separate parts and the subject matter of each *Sūrah* was complete in itself. But when it was compiled in the form of a book, in its present order, in addition to the independent and separate subject matter that every *Sūrah* possessed, another chain of interrelated and interdependent subject matter linking all the various *Sūrahs* came into being and thus the Quranic subjects acquired a new breadth and a new depth.

Subject Matter

This *Sūrah*, as its title shows, deals with the history of the Jewish people, with pointed reference to two outstanding occasions when they openly disobeyed and defied the two great Prophets of God—David and Jesus. As a result of this defiance they suffered destruction of their national life, first at the hands of the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar and then at those of the Roman Emperor Titus. This special reference to the twofold destruction of Jews implied a warning for Muslims that their subsequent wrongdoing and transgression would also result in the double eclipse of their national life. The warning, however, was accompanied with a word of hope and good cheer for them. It was to the effect that since the Holy Prophet was the last Law-giving Prophet, his Dispensation would not, like the Jewish Dispensation, suffer irreparable damage but after initial reverses would emerge triumphant with increased lustre and effulgence.

Moreover, some subjects to which only implied reference was made in the preceding *Sūrah* have been dealt with at some length in the present one. For instance in *Sūrah* An-Naḥl, honey was described as a cure for many physical diseases. This description implied a beautiful hint that the Quran, being spiritual honey, contains the panacea for humanity's moral and spiritual ailments and disorders. This subject which was treated only casually in the preceding chapter has been dealt with exhaustively in the present one, as is clear from the words, *And We are gradually revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers.* (17:83).

The *Sūrah* opens with the subject of *Isrā'* (Spiritual Night Journey of the Holy Prophet) in order to show that, the Holy Prophet being the successor and counterpart of Moses, his followers will conquer the lands which were promised to Moses, and that like Moses he will also have to leave his native place. But his Migration will lead to the very rapid progress and advancement of his noble cause. After this we are briefly told that the people of Moses acquired great power and prestige through him though subsequently they came to grief by defying and ignoring Divine warning. But the Quran, being a more complete code of Laws, is capable of bringing about a greater and more complete change in the lives of its followers than was the Book of Moses. This brief reference to the rise and decline of Jews is attended with a warning for Muslims that God would bestow upon them His favours and like the Jews they would also rise to great heights of material greatness and glory, but when they had acquired wealth, power and influence they should not forget God. After this we are told that there is nothing bad in seeking the good things of this life but their enjoyment should not lead us to a life of ease and forgetfulness. Then some rules of conduct are mentioned by acting upon which one can rise to a very high spiritual stature. But instead of thinking over and benefiting by these rules disbelievers arrogantly turn away from them and give no thought to the dreadful end to which their conceit and pride are likely to lead them. They are warned that rejection of truth is never productive of wholesome results and that they will be visited with severe Divine punishment, particularly in the latter days, when the world shall witness a fight to the finish between the angels of Heaven and the sons of darkness and finally the forces of satan shall suffer complete rout.

The *Sūrah* proceeds to administer a severe rebuke to disbelievers that they seek to annihilate the Holy Prophet, but God has decreed a great purpose for him and a mighty destiny awaits him. His name shall be known to the remotest corners of the earth and shall be honoured to the end of time. The world shall recognize him as humanity's greatest Guide and Leader and the Quran as a storehouse of limitless, spiritual knowledge. The *Sūrah* closes with a brief description of the signs of the latter days and of the evils that will then prevail in the world and declares that it is prayer and connection with God alone that can save man from sin.

أیاتها ١١٢ سُوۡرَةُ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ مَکِّیَّةٌ ١٧ رکوعاتها ١٢

(BANĪ ISRĀ’ĪL)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.1930

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۝١

2. Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque, the [b]environs of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our Signs. Surely, He alone is the Hearing, the Seeing.1931

سُبۡحٰنَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَسۡرٰی بِعَبۡدِہٖ لَیۡلًا مِّنَ الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ اِلَی الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡاَقۡصَا الَّذِیۡ بٰرَکۡنَا حَوۡلَہٗ لِنُرِیَہٗ مِنۡ اٰیٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّہٗ ہُوَ السَّمِیۡعُ الۡبَصِیۡرُ ۝٢

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[a]See 1:1. [b]5:22; 7:138.

1930. Commentary:
See 1:1.

1931. Important Words:
اسری (carried) is derived from سری. They say سری باللیل او سری اللیل i.e. he journeyed or travelled by night or in the night. اسراه او اسری به means, he made him journey or travel, or he transported him by night or in the night; he journeyed or travelled with him, by night or in the night, or simply, he carried him. The Quranic expression سبحان الذی اسری بعبده لیلا means, Glory be to Him Who transported His servant by night. According to some lexicologists اسری is used for journey in the first part of the night and سری for the last part of it. According to others, the verb اسری is from سراة which means, a wide tract of land. According to this meaning the expression اسری بعبده means, Who transported His servant over a wide tract of land (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

المسجد الاقصی (the Distant Mosque). اقصی is derived from قصی. They say قصی المکان i.e. the place was or became distant. اقصی means, distant or very distant (Aqrab). المسجد الاقصی may signify the Prophet Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem, the Holy Prophet’s Mosque at Medina or the Promised Messiah’s Mosque at Qadian.

Commentary:
The verse is supposed by almost all commentators of the Quran to refer to the معراج (Spiritual Ascension of the Holy Prophet). The subject of *Mi‘rāj* has become much complicated and confused on account of the many divergent traditions that deal with it. Contrary to popular view we are, however, inclined towards the opinion that the present verse deals with the اسراء (Night Journey) of the Holy Prophet while his *Mi‘rāj* (Spiritual Ascension) has been dealt with in *Sūrah* An-Najm. That *Sūrah*

removes all the obscurities and ambiguities that have confused the popular mind in regard to this important subject. In *Sūrah* An-Najm we have:

It is nothing but a revelation that is revealed. The One of mighty powers has taught him (this knowledge): the One Possessor of strength. So He manifested His ascendance (over everything) and He revealed His Word when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew nearer (to God); then he came down to (His creatures), so that he became, as it were, the one chord of two bows or closer still. And He revealed to His servant that which He revealed. The heart (of the Prophet) was not untrue to that which he saw. Will you then dispute with him concerning that which he saw? And certainly he saw Him a second time, near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass, near which is the Garden of Abode. This was when a wonderful and glorious Divine manifestation covered the Lote-tree. The eye deviated not nor did it wander. Surely, he saw the greatest of the Signs of his Lord. (53:5-19).

These verses give a graphic description of the *Mi'rāj*, for the facts mentioned in them all relate to it, e.g. the Holy Prophet went up to the Lote-tree; (2) the Lote-tree was covered with "something"; (3) the Prophet saw the Paradise (the Garden of Abode) near the Lote-tree; (4) he became, as it were, the one chord of two bows; (5) he saw God (and the heart of the Prophet was not untrue to that which he saw); and (6) the word of God descended on the Lote-tree.

All these details have also been mentioned in the traditions which deal with the *Mi'rāj*. As for the Lote-tree, Abū Hurairah (as reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abū Ḥātim, Ibn Merdawaih, Abū Ya'la and Baihaqī) says, "In the night of *Mi'rāj*, after having seen other Prophets of God in heaven, the Holy Prophet proceeded further till he reached the Lote-tree." The same fact has been mentioned in the tradition quoted on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Merdawaih, Baihaqī, and Ibn 'Asākir, and in the tradition quoted on the authority of Mālik Ibn Ṣa'ṣā' by Ahmad bin Ḥanbal, Bukhārī, Muslim and Ibn Jarīr and in the tradition quoted on the authority of Anas by Bukhārī (Bukhārī, chapter on *Mi'rāj*, & Al-Khaṣā'iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, pp. 153, 167 & 174).

The second important detail mentioned in *Sūrah* An-Najm is that when the Prophet reached the Lote-tree, he saw it covered with some extraordinary thing (53:17). This has also been mentioned in the traditions that deal with *Mi'rāj*. In the tradition reported by Abū Hurairah to which reference has been made above we read فغشيها نور الخلاق عزوجل i.e. when the Holy Prophet reached the Lote-tree, the light of the Powerful and Glorious Creator covered it (Al-Khaṣā'iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, p. 174). Similarly, in the tradition reported by Anas we have: "Then the Lote-tree became covered with a special Divine grace so much so that in its newly changed condition its beauty defied all description" (Muslim, *Kitābul-Īmān*)

The third incident referred to in chapter 53 (An-Najm) is that the Holy Prophet saw Paradise near the Lote-tree. This has also found mention in traditions which deal with *Mi‘rāj*. In the tradition quoted on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī by Ibn Jarīr and mentioned in some other books of Ḥadīth we read: ثم انی رفعت الی الجنة i.e. after I had seen the Prophets in the heavens I was taken up to Paradise. This is followed by the words ثم انی رفعت الی سدرة المنتهی i.e. after paradise I was led up to the Lote-tree (Ibn Jarīr, vol. 15, p. 11).

The fourth important detail mentioned in chapter 53 is that when the Holy Prophet had a vision of those celestial scenes he was transported into a highly spiritual state which has been described in the words, *So that he became, as it were, the one chord of two bows or closer still.*

This fact has also been mentioned in the traditions about *Mi‘rāj*. In the tradition reported by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī and referred to above we find the words: فکان قاب قوسین او ادنی i.e. between God and the Prophet there was the one chord of two bows or closer still.

The fifth important and relevant incident mentioned in chapter 53 is that during the *Mi‘rāj* the Prophet had a vision of God Himself (53:12). This fact has also been mentioned in the traditions quoted by Ibn Merdawaih on the authority of Asmā’, daughter of Abū Bakr (Al-Khaṣā’iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, p. 177), and by Muslim on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (Muslim, *Kitābul-Īmān*). In the latter tradition we read راٰه بفؤاده مرتین i.e. twice the Prophet saw God with the eyes of his heart.

The sixth notable detail mentioned in chapter 53 is that God spoke to the Holy Prophet near the Lote-tree (53:11). This fact has also found a mention in the traditions. For instance, in the tradition reported by Abū Hurairah we have فکلمه الله تعالی عند ذالک i.e. so God spoke to him near it—the Lote-tree (Al-Khaṣā’iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, p. 174). Similarly, Ibn Abū Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Anas bin Mālik that when the Prophet arrived near the Lote-tree, God addressed him by name saying یا محمد i.e. O Muḥammad, and then Anas continues to finish the ḥadīth. These very striking similarities and resemblances between the subject matter of *Sūrah* An-Najm and the traditions about *Mi‘rāj* leave no doubt that it is the *Mi‘rāj* of the Holy Prophet which has been described in that *Sūrah*.

After having established the fact that *Sūrah* An-Najm contains a description of the *Mi‘rāj* it is important to point out that this *Sūrah* has been admitted by the consensus of scholarly opinion to have been revealed in the fifth year of the Call or even earlier. The following very well-known historical event proves it. A party of early Muslims had sought refuge in Abyssinia. They left Mecca in the seventh month of the fifth year of the Call (Muir, The Life of Mahomet, 1923, p. 69). Now the traditions agree that three months had hardly elapsed since this little band of the Faithful had left for Abyssinia when they returned to Mecca (Muir, The Life of Mahomet, 1923, p. 80). The reason which, according to traditions, led to their early return was this. The Holy Prophet was one day reciting chapter 53. When he came to the words, *Rather prostrate yourselves before Allah, and worship Him* (53:63), the Prophet and the Muslims with him fell prostrate on the ground. The disbelievers present on the occasion, being overwhelmed with the grand theme of the *Sūrah* and the solemnity of the occasion, also joined the Prophet in prostration. This gave rise to the rumour that the Quraish had converted to Islam. When this rumour reached Abyssinia, Muslim refugees hastened back to Mecca. This shows that the recitation of the *Sūrah* which led to this incident having taken place, must have been revealed in the fifth year of the Call or sometime prior to it.

After a brief description of the *Mi'rāj* or the Spiritual Ascension of the Holy Prophet and of the time when it took place, it may be noted here that the اسراء *Isrā'* or the Night Journey of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem, with which the present verse deals took place in the eleventh year of the Call (Zurqāni, vol. 1, p. 306). Christian writers, however, put it in the twelfth year of the Call (Muir, The Life of Mahomet, 1923, p. 121). Traditions relating to this incident also corroborate the date referred to above. According to the traditions quoted by Ibn Merdawaih and Ibn Sa'd, the *Isrā'* took place on the seventeenth of Rabī'ul-Awwal, a year before the Hijrah (Al-Khaṣā'iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, p. 162). Similarly, a tradition quoted by Baihaqī on the authority of Ibn Shihāb, relates that the *Isrā'* took place a year before the Hijrah. Another tradition also quoted by Baihaqī places the Night Journey to Jerusalem six months before the Hijrah (Al-Khaṣā'iṣul-Kubrā, vol. 1, p. 162).

All these traditions go to prove that the *Isrā'* took place six months or a year prior to the Hijrah and it has been shown above that the *Mi'rāj* took place about the fifth year of the Call. Thus the two incidents are separated from each other by an interval of six or seven years and therefore cannot be identical; the *Mi'rāj* must be regarded as quite distinct and separate from the *Isrā'*.

Irrefutable evidence which shows that the *Mi'rāj* and the *Isrā'* were two separate incidents is the fact that it was during the fifth year of the Call that the five daily prayers were enjoined upon Muslims. If the *Mi'rāj* be considered as identical with the *Isrā'*, then it will also have to be admitted that the five daily Prayers were enjoined upon Muslims in the eleventh or twelfth year of the Call which is evidently wrong because all traditionalists agree that the five Prayers were prescribed in the very early years of the Call.

It may incidentally be stated here that the *Mi'rāj* itself seems to have occurred twice. As it appears from the Ḥadīth, the first *Mi'rāj* occurred in the beginning of the Holy Prophet's ministry when the foundation of the Sharī'ah may be said to have been laid and Prayers were made obligatory, which seem to have taken place in the first year of the Call (Bukhārī, chapter on *Tauḥīd*; Jarīr, vol. 15, p. 4). The second or the better known *Mi'rāj* took place about the fifth year of the Call when the five prescribed Prayers were made obligatory and chapter 53, containing a description of it, was revealed (or it may have taken place even earlier and may have been subsequently referred to in Ch. 53). The *Isrā'*, however, is quite a separate event which undoubtedly occurred in the eleventh or twelfth year of the Call when the Prophet was living in the house of his cousin, Ummi Hānī, after the death of his wife, Khadījah, which took place in the tenth year of the Call after the Prophet had come out of the Valley (شعب) of Abū Ṭālib.

In addition to this strong historical evidence, other relevant circumstances also lend support to the view that the two incidents are quite distinct and separate from each other:

(1) The first evidence in this connection is furnished by the Quran itself. It gives an account of the Prophet's *Mi'rāj* (Spiritual Ascension) in chapter 53 but makes no reference to his *Isrā'* (Night Journey to Jerusalem), while in the present *Sūrah* it speaks of his *Isrā'* but omits all allusion to his *Mi'rāj*. This shows that the two incidents took place separately and, therefore, could not be mentioned together. It is inconceivable that the Quran should have mentioned the concluding portion of this incident in one *Sūrah* and the first portion of the selfsame incident in another *Sūrah* five years later.

(2) The second evidence which supports this inference is the fact that there was only one person, namely Ummi Hānī, who was present with the Prophet during the night when the *Isrā'* (Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem) took place and she speaks only of his visit to Jerusalem and makes no mention of his journey to the heavens. She was the first person whom the Prophet informed of his Night Journey to Jerusalem and at least seven collectors of traditions have given her account of the incident on the authority of four different reporters who have reported the incident from her. All these four reporters concur in saying that the Prophet went to Jerusalem and returned to Mecca the same night. If the Prophet had spoken of his Ascension to the heavens also, Ummi Hānī could not have failed to refer to it in one or other of her reports. But she does not do so in any of her reports, which conclusively shows that during the night in question the Holy Prophet made the *Isrā'* or the Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem only and that the *Mi'rāj* did not take place on that occasion. So the *Isrā'* or the Prophet's Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem should not be confused with the *Mi'rāj* or his Spiritual Ascension to heaven.

(3) All the different reporters of this incident may be placed in three categories: (a) those who speak of the Prophet's Ascension direct to heaven and make no mention of his Journey to Jerusalem; (b) those who speak

first of his Journey to Jerusalem and then of his Ascension to heaven; and (c) those who only speak of His Journey to Jerusalem and make no mention at all of his Ascension to heaven. Of the reporters of this last group, there is a goodly number who say expressly that the Prophet returned to Mecca after his Journey to Jerusalem.

It is evident that the reports of the first group point to the *Mi‘rāj* as being distinct from the *Isrā’* inasmuch as, according to them, the Holy Prophet was taken from his house direct to heaven, so Jerusalem could not lie in his way. The reporters of this group are Anas, Mālik bin Ṣa‘ṣā’ and Abū Dharr, who was one of the earliest converts to Islam.

Similarly, the reports of those who speak only of the Prophet’s Journey to Jerusalem and make no mention of his Ascension to heaven also show that when he made his Night Journey to Jerusalem, he did not ascend to heaven, for if he had ascended to heaven after his visit to Jerusalem, it is inconceivable that the reporters, after mentioning the less important part of the vision, should have omitted to mention its more important part which related to his Ascension to heaven, and to his having seen God and having had communion with Him. The reporters of this group of traditions are Anas and ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, the latter being one of the earliest and best-loved of the Prophet’s Companions.

Reports of the third group clearly state that the Prophet returned to Mecca after his visit to Jerusalem and did not ascend to heaven. These also demonstrate the two events to be distinct and separate from each other. The reporters of this group are ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbās, ‘Ā’ishah and Ummi Salma and Ummi Hānī. All of them with the exception of ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, who, as stated above, was among the earliest converts to Islam, were the Prophet’s very near relatives and enjoyed his intimate and constant company. It is impossible to impugn their evidence.

Another argument in favour of *Isrā’* being distinct from *Mi‘rāj* are the traditions which speak of the Prophet’s transportation to the heavens after his visit to Jerusalem and then of his return from the heavens to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem back to Mecca (Al-Khaṣā’iṣul-Kubrā, vol. I, p. 154). Now, going to Jerusalem before ascending to heaven may be considered as reasonable, for it served for the Prophet the purpose of offering Prayers at the place where a large party of heavenly Messengers had delivered their Divine Message, but it is difficult to understand why the same route should have been followed during the return journey, when on his return from heaven the Prophet is not reported to have performed any specific act at Jerusalem. The only reasonable assumption is that the account of the *Isrā’* became mixed up with that of the *Mi‘rāj*. Anas seems to have related the account of both the *Isrā’* and the *Mi‘rāj* to some reporters who mixed up the two accounts and mistakenly thought that they formed the two parts of the same event and thus these reporters were led to believe that while coming back from his *Mi'rāj* the Prophet went to Jerusalem from where he returned to Mecca. In fact, the confusion seems to have arisen from the same word اسراء (which means a night journey) having been used for both the Holy Prophet's اسراء (Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem) and his معراج (Spiritual Ascension to heaven); and the resemblance that existed in some of the details in the description of the اسراء (*Isrā'*) and the معراج (*Mi'rāj*) heightened and confirmed it.

Internal evidence of the traditions also points to the fact that the *Isrā'* and the *Mi'rāj* were two distinct and separate events. The traditions which first give an account of the Prophet's visit to Jerusalem and then of his transportation from Jerusalem to heaven also state that at Jerusalem he met the former Prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and that in the heavens he met the same Prophets again but could not recognize them. Now how did these Prophets whom he had met at Jerusalem reach the heavens before him and why could he not recognize them while he had seen them only a short while ago in the course of the same journey? If the two meetings had taken place separately and at a distance of long intervals, it was possible that he could not have recognized some of them at the time of the second meeting in a changed atmosphere. But it is inconceivable that he should have failed to recognize them when he had met them only a short while ago in the course of the same journey.

It having been established that the *Isrā'* and the *Mi'rāj* were two separate and distinct events, it is necessary to give a somewhat detailed account of *Isrā'* as given in the traditions as it forms the subject matter of the verse under comment. The most reliable account of it is to be found in the tradition quoted by Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Anas bin Mālik. It is briefly as follows:

'When the Archangel Gabriel brought the *Burāq* to the Holy Prophet, he mounted it, and had gone only a short distance, when he saw an old woman. The Prophet asked Gabriel who she was, but Gabriel gave no answer to his question; on the contrary he told him not to ask questions, just as Moses in his معراج (Spiritual Ascension) was told not to put unnecessary questions (18:71). After the Prophet had gone a little further he saw a man calling him by name from across the road in order to invite his attention to himself. But Gabriel asked him again not to heed his call. When the Prophet had proceeded a little further, he met a party of men who greeted him with the greeting of peace. Gabriel told him to return their greeting. After this, the Prophet reached the Holy House in Jerusalem. There Gabriel presented him with three cups containing water, milk and wine. The Prophet took the cup containing milk and drank it and refused to accept the other two. Upon this Gabriel said to him, "Thou hast, indeed, chosen the right course which is in perfect harmony with a pure, unsullied nature. If thou hadst accepted water or wine, thou and thine followers would have been lost." Then Adam and the other Prophets were presented to him, and the Holy Prophet led them in Prayers. After this Gabriel explained to him that the old woman he saw on the way was an embodied representation of the life of this world and only as much was left of the life of the world as was left of the life of that old woman. As for the person who called him from across the road, he was *Iblīs*, the enemy of God. The party of men who greeted him were the Prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus' (Ibn Jarīr).

This tradition serves as a key to resolve this whole allegory. It gives the most reliable and correct account of the *Isrā*’. It shows that the Journey to Jerusalem was no physical act but only a vision. This is clear from the following facts:

(a) It is stated in this tradition that during the Night Journey to Jerusalem, the Prophet saw an old woman, a person standing on one side of the road, and three cups full of water, wine and milk (of which the Prophet chose the last), and Gabriel told him what all these things signified. The explanation and interpretation by Gabriel of the things the Prophet saw shows that the Journey was only a vision, for it is only things seen in visions that need interpretation and explanation.

(b) The Night Journey has been spoken of as a vision in the present *Sūrah* (v. 61). Accordingly, we find that several Companions of the Prophet and some of the later scholars of Islam have, on the basis of this verse, declared the *Isrā*’ to be a vision. For instance, Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Jarīr report that when Mu‘āwiyah was asked concerning the *Isrā*’, he said that it was a vision which came out to be true (Manthūr, vol. 4, p. 197). ‘Ā’isha is also reported to have held the same view. (Hishām and Mas‘ūd, vol. 1).

(c) We learn from the ḥadīth that when the Holy Prophet spoke of his Night Journey to Jerusalem he was asked to give a description of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Prophet is reported to have said that at that time God presented before his eyes an embodied representation of the Temple and he was thus able to describe it as demanded of him (Ibn Kathīr, vol. 6, p. 18).

The Vision of the Prophet referred to in the present verse implied a great prophecy. His journey to the Distant Mosque (المسجد الاقصى) meant his Migration to Medina where he was to build a Mosque which was destined to become later the Centre of all Faiths and Dispensations and the Holy Prophet’s seeing himself in the Vision leading other Prophets of God in Prayers signified that the new Faith Islam was not to remain confined to the place of its birth but was to spread all over the world and the followers of all religions were to join its fold. His going to Jerusalem in the Vision may also be understood to mean that he was to be given dominion over the territory in which Jerusalem was situated. This prophecy was fulfilled

3. And [a]We gave Moses the Book, and We made it a

وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى

[a]2:54, 88; 23:50; 32:24; 40:54.

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in the Caliphate of Umar.

The words of the verse also lend support to the view that the Vision constituted a prophecy about the great future of Islam. The Distant Mosque (المسجد الاقصى) that the Prophet saw in the Vision represented his own Mosque at Medina, Jerusalem stood for Medina and his going to Jerusalem signified his Migration to Medina. The Vision begins with the words سبحان الذى (Glory be to Him) which indicated that the Migration of the Prophet would redound to the Glory of God. The word سبحان itself shows that the Vision embodied a prophecy; for a physical journey to the Temple at Jerusalem could not be regarded as evidence of the Glory of God. But as establishment of the Islamic State at Medina was to fulfil a prophecy, that event did serve as evidence of Divine glory. Thus the words, *Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque,* signified that God would take the Holy Prophet to a Mosque resembling المسجد الاقصى (the Distant Mosque) at Jerusalem so that His word might be fulfilled.

The words, *We might show him some of Our Signs*, pointed to the great possibilities of the Prophet's journey to Medina. The Prophet's Migration to Medina served as a prelude to the glorious future of Islam which was then hidden from the eyes of the world and thus God's great signs were manifested. The reason why the Holy Prophet's Mosque was called المسجد الاقصى (the Distant Mosque), and why Medina was shown to him in the Vision in the form of Jerusalem was that the blessings which God had conferred on the Mosque at Jerusalem were also in store in a greater measure for the Prophet's Mosque at Medina.

The Prophecy implied in the words, *Who carried His servant by night*, was fulfilled when the Prophet left Mecca at dead of night. He did not undertake this journey of his own accord but in pursuance of God's express command. And as in his Night Journey to Jerusalem in the Vision he was accompanied by the Archangel Gabriel, so in his Flight to Medina he was accompanied by his most faithful companion, Abū Bakr. The word "Gabriel", which means "Man of God", fitly applies to Abū Bakr and portrays his spiritual eminence.

The Vision may also be taken as referring to a spiritual journey of the Holy Prophet to a distant land in some future time. It meant that when spiritual darkness enveloped the entire world, the Prophet would appear in spirit a second time in the person of one of his followers, in a land far away from the scene of his first advent—in the Punjab. A pointed reference to this second advent of the Holy Prophet is to be found in 62:3-5.

guidance for the children of Israel, *saying*, [a]'Take no guardian beside Me,1932

لِبَنِيٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اَلَّا تَتَّخِذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِيۡ وَكِيۡلًا ؕ﴿۳﴾

4. O ye the progeny of [b]those whom We carried *in the Ark* with Noah.' He was indeed a grateful servant.1933

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنۡ حَمَلۡنَا مَعَ نُوۡحٍ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَبۡدًا شَكُوۡرًا ﴿۴﴾

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[a]17:69. [b]19:59; 23:28.

1932. Commentary:

With this verse begins an account of Moses and his people. The preceding verse alluded to the Divine promise that the Holy Prophet and his followers would conquer "the Distant Mosque" and the land around it. Muslims are told here that Jerusalem and the country around it was first given to Moses and his people in accordance with Divine promise. The people of Moses lost it because they disobeyed the commandments of God. Muslims should beware lest they also break God's covenant and incur His displeasure.

Towards the close of the previous chapter, reference was made to Jews, and Muslims were directed to *argue with them in a way that is best* (16:126). This direction implied that in their discussion with Jews, Muslims should base their arguments on principles accepted by Jews and should advance reasons in support of the truth of Islam from their own (Jewish) Scriptures. The present chapter provides an illustration of the way in which Muslims should discuss religious matters with "the People of the Book." It refers to prophecies contained in the Jewish Scriptures which point to the corruption and degeneration of Jews and their breach of the divine covenant which made them the object of Divine punishment and tells them that now they could only save themselves by accepting the New Covenant—Islam.

1933. Commentary:

The verse is taken by some commentators to refer to the followers of the Holy Prophet, but primarily it refers to the followers of Moses, as the context shows. It reminds the Israelites that they should have profited by the noble example of Noah who with his followers was saved from the Deluge and was grateful to God for that great favour. They, too, were saved from drowning in the sea and should have been grateful to God for that favour but they were not. The verse may also be taken as constituting a forewarning to Muslims who are told that when, by the grace of God, they emerge safe from the storm of opposition and persecution that was raging over their heads, they should be grateful to Him.

5. And We revealed to the children of Israel in the Book, *saying*, 'You will surely do mischief in the land twice, and you will surely become excessively overbearing.'1934

وَقَضَيْنَآ إِلٰى بَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ۝٥

6. So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, We sent against you *some* servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated the *innermost parts of your* houses, and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out.1935

فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ أُولٰىهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلٰلَ الدِّيَارِ ۚ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ۝٦

1934. Commentary:

This verse shows that it was foretold in the Book of Moses that the Israelites would disobey and defy Divine commandments twice and twice would they be visited with punishment. The word الكتاب (the Book) here means, the Book of Moses—the Bible.

The dreadful fate that befell the Israelites on account of their repeated defiance of the commandments of God was mentioned in the Quran to serve as a timely warning for Muslims, but they did not profit by it and followed in the footsteps of the Jews and were punished as the Israelites were punished before them. This slavish imitation of Jews by Muslims was foretold by the Holy Prophet in the well-known tradition viz. لتتبعن من كان قبلكم i.e. Surely, you will follow the ways of those before you (Bukhārī, *Kitābul-I'tiṣām bil-Kitāb was Sunnah*). The Quran refers to the two transgressions of the Israelites in the words: *Those amongst the children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, son of Mary* (5:79).

1935. Important Words:

فجاسوا (and they penetrated). جاس means, he sought for or after a thing or news or tidings eagerly and with the utmost of his endeavour. They say جاسهم الاسد i.e. the lion trod upon them, or came into the midst of them and did mischief among them. The Arabs say جسنا خلال دور القوم i.e. We went to and fro or went about amidst the houses of the people. The Quranic expression فجاسوا خلال الديار means, they went through the midst of the houses and sought for what was in them or they went to and fro among the houses in a sudden attack or they slew you amid your houses (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The first disaster befell the Israelites after David, and the second after Jesus. It appears from the Bible that the Jews had become a very powerful nation after Moses and in the time of David they laid the foundation of a mighty kingdom which continued to flourish for some time after his death in its old might and glory. Then it fell prey to gradual decay and about 733 B.C. Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians, who annexed the whole of Israel north of Jezreel. In 608 B.C. Palestine was ravaged by an Egyptian force under Pharaoh Necho and the Israelites came under Egyptian sway (Jew. Enc., vol. 6, p. 665). The loss of their temporal power and their destruction and desolation, however, did not make them mend their ways. They continued in their old wicked practices. The Prophet Jeremiah warned them to give up their iniquities as the wrath of God was about to overtake them. These are Jeremiah's warnings:

> O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee…? For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers (Jeremiah 4:14 & 31).

The Israelites paid no heed to Jeremiah's warnings. So "the Lord was very angry with them and removed them out of His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only" (2 Kings 17:18). In the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his first invasion of Palestine and carried off some of the Temple vessels, but the city was spared the rigours of a siege. In 597 B.C. also, the city was invested and fell victim to a severe famine. The rebellion of Zedekiah, however, caused a second invasion in 587 B. C., and after a siege of a year and a half, the city was taken by storm. King Zedekiah fled from the city but was taken prisoner. His sons were slain and his eyes were put out and he was bound in fetters and carried off to Babylon. The Temple, the King's palace and all the great buildings in the city were burnt down, the chief priests and other leaders were put to death and many people were carried off in captivity (Jew. Enc., vol. 6, p. 665 & vol. 7, p. 122 under Jerusalem).

Thus was fulfilled the promise about the first of the two warnings held out to the Israelites by Moses to which the present verse refers. The following passages of the Bible contain Moses' warnings to the Jews:

> "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee…The Lord shall bring a

7. Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers.[1936]

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنٰكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيْرًا ⑦

> nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he hath destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustest, throughout all thy lands: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thy own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee…And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to naught; and yet ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. (Deut. 28:15; 49-53; 63-64).

1936. Commentary:

The Jews fared well in exile. Most of them were employed on public works in central Babylonia and many among them eventually gained their freedom and rose to influential positions. Their faith and religious devotion were renewed; the literature of the kingdom was studied, re-edited, and adapted to the needs of the reviving community, and the hope of restoration to Palestine was preached and cherished. About 545 B.C., this aspiration took a more definite form. Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, had by this time attained to dominion over the whole uplands of Asia as far as the shores of the Aegean Sea. The Jews made a secret agreement with him and helped him to conquer Babylon. The city surrendered to his army without resistance in July, 539 B.C. As a reward for their services Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to their country, and also helped them in the rebuilding of the Temple. In 538 B.C. Cyrus proclaimed the rebuilding of the Temple as his divine mission but

8. *Now*, [a]if you do well, you will do well for your own souls; and if you do evil, it will *only go* against them. So when the time for the latter warning came, *We raised a people against you* to cover your faces with grief, and to enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all that they conquered with utter destruction.1937

اِنْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ قف
وَاِنْ اَسَاْتُمْ فَلَهَا ؕ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ
الْاٰخِرَةِ لِيَسُوْٓءٗا وُجُوْهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا
الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوْهُ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَّلِيُتَبِّرُوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيْرًا ۝٨

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[a] 4:124-125; 6:161; 28:85; 41:47; 99:8-9.

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the work was not started till the following year (Historians' History of the World, vol. II, p. 126; Jew. Enc., vol. 7, under Jerusalem, Enc. Bib., under Cyrus and 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23). The Judean, Sheshbazzar (a Governor under Cyrus) brought back to the Temple vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away and prepared to undertake the work at the expense of the royal purse. A large body of exiles returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:3-5). The work of rebuilding the Temple steadily progressed and it was completed in 516 B.C. (Jew. Enc., vol. 7, under Jerusalem).

It is to these events and the subsequent prosperity of the Jews that the verse under comment refers. All this, however, was foretold by Moses long before it came to pass. Says he:

> And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers (Deut. 30:1-5). See also 2:105.

1937. Commentary:

This verse speaks of the Jews'

9. It may be that your Lord will *now* have mercy on you; but if you return *to your previous state*, We *too* will return, and We have made Hell a prison for the disbelievers.**1938**

عَسٰی رَبُّكُمۡ اَنۡ يَّرۡحَمَكُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ عُدۡتُّمۡ
عُدۡنَا ۘ وَجَعَلۡنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ حَصِيۡرًا ⑨ وقفِ لازم

second relapse into iniquitous and evil ways and of the punishment which befell them in consequence. They persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him on the cross and stamp out his Movement. So God afflicted them with a terrible punishment when in 70 A. D. the Roman forces under Titus swept the country and, amid circumstances of unparalleled horror, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple of Solomon was burnt down (Enc. Bib., under Jerusalem). This disaster took place when Jesus was yet living in Kashmir. It was also foretold by Moses. The Bible says:

Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hair. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among them (Deut. 32:18-26).

It may be noted here that this prophecy about the second punishment is mentioned in the Bible after the prophecy which spoke of the first punishment (Deut. 28). More than that, it is mentioned even after the prophecy which speaks of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem (Deut. 30:1-5). This shows that this prophecy (Deut. 32:18-26) refers to the second punishment, to which reference has been made in the words of the Quran, in v. 5, viz. *You will surely do mischief in the land twice.*

1938. Commentary:

After speaking of the utter destruction of the Israelites, the Quran in the present verse gives them

10. Surely, [a]this Quran guides to what is most right; and gives to the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a great reward.1939

اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ
وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ
الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ﴿۱۰﴾

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[a] 12:112; 16:103; 18:3.

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a message of hope and informs them that, although so far as the Bible and the Jewish faith are concerned their fate is sealed forever and they can never hope to regain their departed glory, yet, outside the Mosaic Dispensation, God has opened to them a new way by following which they can be readmitted to His Mercy and Grace. That way is Islam and through it they can again rise to their former power and greatness (Deut. 33:1-3). They should avail themselves of this new opportunity and inherit Divine blessings. If, however, they refuse to benefit by this last opportunity, God’s wrath shall descend on them and they shall be consigned to everlasting perdition. While in these verses the Jews were told that according to the prophecies of their own Scriptures there was no future for them outside Islam, the Muslims have also been warned that, like the Jews, they too will be punished twice if they did not give up their evil ways. But they also threw this timely warning to the winds and the result was their disgrace and punishment. They, too, were twice punished. The first punishment overtook them at the fall of Baghdad when the barbarous hordes of Hulagu laid waste that great seat of learning and power. In the heyday of their glory Muslims married the beautiful women of Farghana. These women brought with them their idolatrous beliefs with the result that later generations of Muslims became infected with these beliefs and lost the respect they once had for their own religion and became lax in morals and discipline. This led to the invasion of Baghdad by the savage Tartar hordes who exceeded the Babylonian despoilers of Palestine in savagery and barbarity. Baghdad fell in 1258 A.D. and 1,800,000 Muslims are said to have been put to the sword. All members of the royal family were mercilessly butchered and for days the city was given over to pillage and arson and with the destruction of the Abbasid Empire, Muslim power in the east came to a most inglorious end. Islam, however, emerged triumphant from this dreadful ordeal. The victors became the vanquished and the humble servants of Islam. The second punishment was destined to overtake Muslims in the latter days. Its signs have already begun to appear. See also 17:105.

1939. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that the goal which the Quran sets before its followers is much nobler and more sublime than that of the former

11. And that for [a]those who do not believe in what is to come later We have prepared a grievous punishment.**1940**

وَّاَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۱﴾ ع

R. 2.

12. And [b]man asks for evil as he should ask for good; and man is hasty.**1941**

وَيَدْعُ الْاِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَآءَهٗ بِالْخَيْرِ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا ﴿۱۲﴾

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[a]16:23; 27:5; 34:9. [b]10:12.

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peoples and promises its true followers both spiritual and temporal blessings. They should, therefore, make great efforts to attain them and be on their guard against a lax and undisciplined life and in every way prove themselves deserving of the promised boons.

1940. Commentary:

This verse continues and develops the theme of the previous verse and leaves no doubt about the fact that negligent people come to grief. The word الآخرة (lit. meaning 'that which comes after') has erroneously been taken to mean يوم الآخرة (the Last Day) only. The word should be interpreted in harmony with its context. In the present verse 'the end of nations' seems to be the most appropriate meaning of the word الآخرة. The verse means to say that those who ignore the patent fact that the end of every rise is fall, tend to neglect their duties and responsibilities with the result that they draw upon themselves Divine punishment.

The fact that this verse is connected with the preceding verse by the conjunction و (and) also supports the above interpretation, for it shows that it is Muslims who have been addressed here, and Muslims cannot be said to deny يوم الآخرة (the Day of Judgement). So the word آخرة cannot be taken to mean here the Day of Judgement or the Last Day but that which is yet to come—the end of a doomed nation.

1941. Commentary:

This verse corroborates and explains the interpretation put upon the previous verse. It makes no mention of the Day of Judgement. The verses that follow also continue the same theme.

The expression ويدع الانسان بالشر دعاءه بالخير (And man asks for evil as he should ask for good), does not mean that there lives a man so foolish as to pray to God to send him evil. It only means that such is the condition of man that while by his words of mouth he prays to God to grant him good, by his actual bad deeds he invites the displeasure and punishment of God. Thus his actions belie his words.

The expression may also be interpreted as, "And man calls for evil as he should call for good." According to both renderings the verse signifies that when nations or

13. And [a]We have made the night and the day two Signs, and the Sign of night We have made dark, and the Sign of day We have made sight-giving, that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and [b]that you may know the computation of years and *the science of* reckoning. And everything We have explained with a detailed explanation.[1942]

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ اٰيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ اٰيَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ اٰيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ؕ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ تَفْصِيْلًا ﴿١٣﴾

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[a]36:38; 40:62; 41:38. [b]10:6.

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individuals attain material wealth and rise to power and influence, they tend to neglect their duties and responsibilities and thus in the very hour of their power and glory they lay the foundations of their decay and death. At a time when they should have established peace and justice on earth by the help of the great resources placed at their disposal, they give themselves up to enjoyment and self-aggrandizement. The time of their power and glory is their testing time when they should particularly be on their guard. But such is the tragedy of human affairs that power and prosperity make man arrogant, defiant and heedless. The verse may also mean that man invites evil to himself with the same zeal and vehemence as God invites him to good. That is to say while God wishes man to inherit His blessings by doing good, he earns His displeasure by doing evil and thus invites his own ruin and destruction. In this case the action of دعاء (inviting to good) will be taken as referring to God.

The words, *and man is hasty*, signify that if man were to pause and consider before embarking upon any venture he would be spared many a fall. In fact, haste is at the root of most of man's failures.

1942. Commentary:

The verse should not be understood to mean that God first made both night and day and then the one was displaced by the other. It only means that God has made night and day such that both have their benefits for man; but whereas the benefits of the night are subtle and hidden, those of the day are clear and manifest.

Similarly, the natural phenomenon of the alternation of night and day helps man in determining the dates of the year and in preparing calendars. It has also led to the development and progress of the science of mathematics. See also 10:6.

14. And every man’s works have We fastened to his neck; [a]and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open.[1943]

وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنٰهُ طٰٓئِرَهٗ فِيْ عُنُقِهٖ ؕ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ كِتٰبًا يَّلْقٰهُ مَنْشُوْرًا ﴿١٤﴾

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[a] 45:29; 83:7-10.

'Day' being the symbol of happiness and prosperity and 'night' that of grief and sorrow, the verse points to two kinds of signs: (a) those that lead to a people’s prosperity and advance; and (b) those that lead to their misery and destruction. We are exhorted here to pray that we may only be shown the first kind of signs. By inference we are also exhorted to make both the time of our distress and misery and the period of our progress and prosperity means of our spiritual advancement, just as God has made both night and day as a source of great material benefits for us.

1943. Important Words:

طائره (his works). طائر is derived from طار which means, it (a bird) moved in the air by means of its wings; it flew. طار فؤاده means, his courage fled away. The Arabs used to say to a man from whom they augured evil, طائر الله لا طائرک i.e. what God doth and decreeth, not what thou dost and causest, is to be feared. Or they would say لا طير الا طير الله i.e. there is no evil fortune but that which is of God. طائر means, an omen, a bodement of good or evil; good or evil fortune, especially evil fortune; ill-luck; the means of subsistence; the actions or works of a man which are, as it were, attached as a necklace to his neck (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7:132.

Commentary:

The words, *every man’s works have We fastened to his neck*, mean that no work of man goes in vain; every action of his must bear some fruit, good or bad. The fastening of the work to the neck of a man denotes that his actions will stick to him permanently and their effects will cling to him as long as he lives.

The word طائر (lit. bird) has been very appropriately used here for the actions of man in order to denote that just as a bird flies away and becomes hidden from the eye, so does a man very often seem to forget his actions, but they remain fastened to his neck with a cord like a bird which is secured from flying away by a string tied round its neck; and therefore, even if they seem to fly away and become hidden from his view, man’s connection with them never ceases and one day he has to reap the fruits thereof.

The word طائر has also been used to draw attention to the fact that if a long string were tied to the leg of a bird and it were let off to fly away, it can fly to the extreme length of the string. The same is the case with the

15. [a]‘Read thy book. Sufficient is thy own soul this day as reckoner against thee.’**1944**

اِقۡرَاۡ كِتٰبَكَ ؕ كَفٰى بِنَفۡسِكَ الۡيَوۡمَ عَلَيۡكَ حَسِيۡبًا ؕ ﴿۱۵﴾

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[a] 17:72; 45:30; 69:20, 26, 27.

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actions of man. Sometimes they appear to be of little significance, yet their effects are far-reaching and permanent.

The verse warns man to be very careful about his actions. He is reminded that since a deed once done cannot be undone and has far-reaching effects and, even if hidden from the human eye, still remains attached to the doer’s neck, it is clear that it is impossible to obliterate it. We should therefore be on our guard against hasty and careless actions, because sooner or later we are bound to reap their consequences. The Quran says, *Whoso does good an atom’s weight will see it, and whoso does evil an atom’s weight will also see it* (99:8, 9). These verses, however, should not be understood to mean that repentance is denied to man. The door of repentance is always open but man’s moral and spiritual lapses, even though they may be forgiven, leave a more or less lasting imprint on his spiritual progress. He lags behind those who are not guilty of such lapses unless he makes a special effort to make up the deficiency. The effects of sins must linger on. The discovery of ethereal waves has confirmed the great truth enunciated about 1,400 years ago by Islam that even the smallest motion causes a stir in the air which goes on enlarging and widening. So we should be very careful about our actions because every deed like a seed grows into a big tree without our knowing it.

The verse may also be taken to mean that man augurs good or evil from outside things while his good or bad augury is inseparably linked to his own neck. The words, *fastened to his neck*, have been used deliberately and with a purpose. When a man does a good deed, he raises his head with pride while with the commission of an evil one he hangs his head in shame. So the word 'neck' has been used here to bring home to him the fact that he himself is his own judge. If he feels that he can raise his head with pride before his associates and friends, he should conclude that he is on the right path but if his head hangs in shame, he must know that he is going to rack and ruin.

The words, *which he will find wide open*, mean that the effect of man’s deeds will begin to manifest itself. It will not remain only like a seed but will grow and develop into a big tree and later bear fruit.

1944. Commentary:

The expression, *Read thy book*, used figuratively means, "take thy punishment". The words, *Sufficient is thy own soul this day as reckoner against thee*, clearly show that punishment is not something that comes from outside but it takes its birth within man himself. In fact, the

16. [a]He who follows the right way follows it only for *the good of* his *own* soul: and he who goes astray, goes astray only to his *own* loss. [b]And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And [c]We never punish until We have sent a Messenger.[1945]

مَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ
ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۗ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ
وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ۗ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِيْنَ حَتّٰى
نَبْعَثَ رَسُوْلًا ﴿١٦﴾

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[a]10:109; 39:42. [b]6:165; 35:19; 39:8; 53:39. [c]28:60.

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punishments and rewards of Heaven and Hell will only be so many embodiments and representations of the deeds, good or bad, of man. Thus in this life man is the architect of his own destiny and in the next he will be his own rewarder or punisher.

1945. Commentary:

This verse further explains the purport of the previous verse. It shows that man himself benefits by his good deeds or suffers the evil consequences of his bad deeds. So whatever he does, he does for or against his own self. A murderer, in fact, murders his own self, and a thief steals his own property. Similarly when a man does good to another person, in reality he does good to himself.

Christian theological writers sometimes quote this verse in support of the doctrine that Jesus took upon himself, and suffered for, the sins of man. They argue that according to this verse a sinner cannot bear the sins of another person, but Jesus, being sinless, could and did bear other people's sins. Without entering here into the sinlessness or otherwise of Jesus, it may be pointed out that what the verse means is only this, that man himself and no one else in his place can suffer the consequences of his actions. He has to bear his own cross; none else shall answer for him. Punishment or reward is no external thing but is another name for the consequences of man's actions, and it is evident that where the seed is sown only there does it bear fruit. So when punishment or reward proceeds from within the doer himself, how can any other person share it with him or be responsible for it?

The verse under comment thus lends no support to the Christian doctrine of Atonement; on the contrary, it refutes and contradicts it. The Christian doctrine is based on the assumption that punishment is something external and therefore one person can atone for the sins of another person. The present verse clearly refutes this unnatural idea.

In order to meet this objection Christians hold Hell to be a material thing. It is clearly unreasonable to believe that Hell is a material thing

17. And [a]when We intend to destroy a township, We address Our commandment to its rebellious people, but they transgress therein; so the sentence *of punishment* becomes due against it, and We destroy it with utter destruction.[1946]

وَإِذَآ أَرَدْنَآ أَن نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا۟ فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا ٱلْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَٰهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

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[a] 22:46; 28:59.

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and Heaven spiritual. Either both are material or both spiritual. If Hell is spiritual then there is no sense in one person bearing the punishment of another. No person can share the regret, grief, anger, etc., of another, because all these things take their birth within man himself and are the result of his own deeds. He can become relieved of the punishment of his deeds only when he brings about death over his baser self and a complete and genuine change takes place in him through repentance and remorse.

The verse also explains another divine law viz. God does not send down destructive punishment upon a people unless He has first raised a Warner among them. This law has also been expressly laid down in vv. 67:9, 10; 39:72; 35:38 & 28:60.

The truth of these verses has been remarkably demonstrated in our own generation. The world has seen pestilences, famines, wars, earthquakes and other calamities of unprecedented severity and unparalleled magnitude in such rapid succession as to embitter human life. But before these calamities and catastrophes visited the earth God raised in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, a Warner who warned mankind of the impending tribulation.

God's purpose in raising His Messengers and sending down punishment when people reject and oppose them is that they should listen to their admonitions and reform themselves. See also 4:166; 24:48; 35:38; 39:72 & 67:9-10.

1946. Important Words:

مترفيها (its rebellious people). مترف is derived from ترف which means, he led a plentiful and pleasant or an easy life; or a life of ease and plenty; it (a plant or herbage) was or became luxuriant, flourishing and fresh by reason of plentiful irrigation. اترف means, he persevered or persisted in, or resolved upon transgression, wrongdoing, or deviation from the right way. They say اترفته النعمة i.e. wealth, or what God bestowed upon him, made him excessively disobedient or rebellious; or extravagant in acts of disobedience

18. [a]How many generations have We destroyed after Noah! And thy Lord suffices as the Knower and Seer of the sins of His servants.**1947**

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ نُوْحٍ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًۢا بَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۸﴾

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[a] 21:12; 65:9.

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and in wrongdoing; or made him lead a life of ease and plenty. مترف therefore means, one left to do what he wills; one enjoying a life of ease and plenty; luxurious or indulging himself largely in the pleasures or delights of the present life; one who is not prevented from enjoying himself; one whose means of subsistence are made ample or plentiful; one whom a life of ease and plenty or wealth causes to exult, or to exult excessively, and to behave insolently and ungratefully; one who magnifies himself; or behaves proudly, haughtily or insolently. The Quranic expression مترفيها means, the worst of its chiefs; and the leaders in evil (Lane & Aqrab). See also 11:117.

Commentary:

Some critics of Islam have first translated this verse as "We command its rebellious inhabitants and they transgress therein" and then have made it a target for objection, saying that God Himself first commands the people to transgress and then punishes them for their transgression. The words of the verse do not justify this objection. The verse clearly states that disbelievers defied the commandments of God and as a result of their defiance and transgression they were destroyed. Elsewhere the Quran expressly says that it is only good deeds that God commands men to do. See 7:29 & 16:91.

The expression, *We address our commandment to its rebellious people*, should not be understood to mean that the command to obey was given only to one section of the people. It was given to all the people as the word مترف (lit. one who does what he pleases and is rebellious) comprises all sorts of disobedient and rebellious people, whether rich or poor. Even if the expression may appear to refer to only one class of people, according to Quranic style and diction, it applies to all peoples. Analogous expressions have been used in the Quran where a command intended for all people seems to have been addressed to one person only. In 38:76 the command to obey Adam was given to all the angels but it seems to have been addressed to *Iblīs* only. See also 2:35.

By قرية (a township) is here meant the mother-town, a town which serves as a metropolis or centre of culture and politics for other towns.

1947. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the appearance of a Divine Messenger is no new phenomenon. Prophets have been appearing in the world since the days of Noah and the enemies of

19. [a]Whoso desires the present life, We hasten for him therein what We will—for such *of them* as We please; then have We appointed Hell for him; he shall burn therein, condemned and rejected.**1948**

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا
نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ
يَصْلٰىهَا مَذْمُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾

20. [b]And whoso desires the Hereafter and strives for it as it should be striven for, and is a believer—these are the ones whose striving shall find favour *with God.***1949**

وَمَنْ اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ
مَّشْكُوْرًا ﴿۲۰﴾

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[a]3:146; 42:21. [b]3:146; 42:21.

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these Prophets have always come to grief. God cannot punish men for going astray without first sending His Messengers to lead them to the right path.

1948. Important Words:

العاجلة (the present life) is the feminine of عاجل which is derived from عجل which means, he hastened, made haste or speed; he was or became hasty, quick or expeditious. عاجل means, present; ready, not delayed; and is the contrary of آجل which means, delayed, postponed, not present, future, etc. العاجلة signifies the present hour or time; the present abode, world, life or state of existence (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse admonishes us not to confine our efforts to the achievement of the paltry material benefits of this life, which are easy to get, and not to regard these gains as a mark of God's grace and pleasure because people who are devoid of all Divine love and are even under the displeasure of God may also succeed in achieving material prosperity by making proper use of the material resources at their disposal. Such prosperity is never the result of God's grace. Only that prosperity can be regarded as the result of God's grace which is accompanied by spiritual advancement. True believers, therefore, should look more to lasting spiritual blessings though they may be late in coming.

1949. Commentary:

The pronoun ها (it) in the expression سعيها (as it should be striven for) refers to the Hereafter, the meaning being that only such efforts as are calculated to secure the good of the Hereafter will be productive of really good results.

The words, *and is a believer*, have

21. To all We render aid—both to these and those—a gift from thy Lord. And the gift of thy Lord is not restricted.[1950]

كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَآءِ
رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ
مَحْظُوْرًا ﴿۲۱﴾

22. Behold, how We have exalted some of them over others *in the present life*; [a]and surely, the Hereafter shall be greater in degrees of rank and greater in excellence.[1951]

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ
وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ اَكْبَرُ دَرَجٰتٍ وَّ اَكْبَرُ
تَفْضِيْلًا ﴿۲۲﴾

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[a] 6:33; 12:58; 16:42.

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been added to point out that the securing of the good of the Hereafter depends upon right belief and purity of heart. Efforts made for material prosperity may bear fruit even in the absence of right belief but efforts made for the attainment of the good of the next life are effective only when they are accompanied by true faith. The verse should not be understood to mean that the good deeds of the Faithful only are acceptable to God. What it means is that good deeds accompanied by true belief in the next life will be fully rewarded in the Hereafter, while the reward of those good deeds which are done without any such belief in the Hereafter is confined to only the material benefits of this world.

1950. Important Words:

نمد (We render aid) is derived from مد. They say مد الحبل i.e. he pulled, strained or stretched the rope. امدہ means, he granted him delay or respite. امدہ بمال کثیر means, he gave him much wealth. امدالامیر الجند بالخیل والرجال means, the commander aided or succoured his army with horses and men (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse removes the misapprehension which might have arisen from the previous verse that good deeds only of the Faithful are rewarded. We are here told that Divine aid is of two kinds: (1) general aid, as a result of which all good works and efforts of all sorts of people, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus etc., bear fruit according to their scope and magnitude and (2) special grace and succour of God which is confined to spiritual matters and which is given to God's true servants only and is denied to disbelievers.

1951. Commentary:

In this world we find that some persons occupy higher positions than others. But in the life to come differences in rank will be much more

23. [a]Set not up with Allah another God lest thou sit down disgraced *and* forsaken.**1952**

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا مَّخْذُوْلًا ﴿۲۳﴾ ۲ ع ۱۲ ۲

R. 3.

24. [b]Thy Lord has commanded, "Worship none but Him, [c]and show kindness to parents. If one of them attain old age with thee or both of them, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but *always* address them with excellent speech.**1953**

وَقَضٰى رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ؕ اِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَوْ كِلٰهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَّهُمَآ اُفٍّ وَّلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۲۴﴾

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[a]17:40; 26:214; 28:89. [b]2:84; 4:37; 12:41; 41:15. [c]6:152; 29:9; 31:15; 46:16.

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clearly marked. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that a section of the inmates of Paradise enjoying very high spiritual positions will find those of still higher ranks to be so far exalted above them that the latter's dwelling-places will appear to them like distant stars raised high in the firmament (Muslim, *Kitābul-Jannat*).

1952. Commentary:

This verse gives the reason why the rewards of the Hereafter will be given only to those who have faith in it. The reason given here is that men will be made to live with those to whom they are attached. Thus those who love God will scale spiritual heights and will become at one with Him. On the other hand those who are devoted to their false gods will be dragged down to the depths of spiritual degradation. In fact *shirk* (idolatry) causes man to sink morally and spiritually. Never has a people steeped in *shirk* been known to have made any real progress. No moral or material progress is possible unless *shirk* is eradicated.

1953. Important Words:

اف (a word expressive of disgust) is derived from اف (*affa*) which means, he said اف (*uff*) by reason of anxiety or disquietude of mind, or by reason of vexation, distress of mind or disgust. اف is a word expressive of vexation, distress of mind or disgust, dislike, displeasure or hatred; dirt of the ear or paring of the nail; alas, woe or fie. They say اف لك i.e. fie upon thee! The Quranic expression فلا تقل لهما اف means, And say not thou to them اف i.e. do not thou deem anything of their affairs burdensome nor be contracted in bosom thereby, nor be tough or harsh or coarse to them; or do not thou say to them anything expressive of the least disgust (Lane & Aqrab).

ولا تنهرهما (nor reproach them). نهر means, he chid him; he checked him, restrained him or forbade him, with rough speech. (Lane & Aqrab).

كريما (excellent) is derived from كرم which means, it was or became highly esteemed or valued; excellent, precious or rare. They say كرمت ارضه i.e. his land was or became productive or fertile. اكرمه means, he treated him with honour or courtesy. كريم therefore means, generous; noble; high-born; highly esteemed or valued; excellent, precious or rare. It is the contrary of لئيم which means, ignoble; low-born, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

With this verse begin those principles and rules of conduct by observing which a people can preserve the integrity of their organization and make it safe against disintegration and decline.

In this connection pride of place is given to the maintenance of belief in the Unity and Oneness of God and refutation of *shirk* (setting up equals with God), because it is in the heyday of their glory and splendour that a people fall a prey to superstitious ideas and idolatrous practices. In fact *shirk* is at the root of all sins. Man sins because he lacks true faith in God and His attributes. Belief in the Unity of God is like a seed out of which grow all virtues. It is the pivot round which the teachings of all religions and codes of morality revolve. This belief constitutes the basis and the foundation for both the law of nature and the Law of Sharī'ah. That the Law of Sharī'ah is based on belief in the Unity of God is too patent a fact to need any explanation; but even the law of nature and all scientific progress are also based on it. For if it be supposed that there are more gods than one, it necessarily follows that there is more than one law of nature. But in the absence of one fixed and uniform natural law all progress of science will have come to an end, because all the discoveries and inventions made by science are due to the belief that an ordered, fixed and unchangeable system pervades the whole universe. Without such a belief man could never have devoted his attention and labour to fathom the secrets of the unknown. The second most important precept laid down in the verse under comment concerns man's moral conduct. His obligations towards his parents form the most important part of it, because it is the parents who first of all direct our attention to God. It is in the parental mirror that the Divine attributes of Mercy, Compassion, Love and Providence are reflected and on a minor human scale are given practical expression. They point to the Being from Whom all things take their origin. The long chain of man's parentage shows that his existence is not the result of mere accident or chance. It turns our thoughts to the Great Originator and Creator. It also shows that a great and noble purpose underlies the creation of man.

The commandment given in relation to God is negative. Man is told that as it is not possible for him to make a return of God's favours, he should at least refrain from *shirk*

25. And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, [a]'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in *my* childhood.[1954]

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيٰنِيْ صَغِيْرًا ۝٢٥

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[a] 14:42; 46:16; 71:29.

(setting up equals with Him). In the case of parents, however, he is given a positive commandment, because he is in a position to return their love and kindness, though only very inadequately. So he is commanded to be generous to them.

The words, *with thee*, are significant. They show that when the parents of a person are dependent on him and live with him, he must be specially on his guard against using any harsh words about them. The words have been added because when a man's parents are living with him, there is always the likelihood for differences to arise and consequently for the embitterment of mutual relations. Moreover, when a person spends his money for another he is inclined to think that he has a right to exercise his authority over him. The Quran therefore has emphasized that extra care should be taken in our relations towards our parents.

In Arabic the word اف (*uff*) is used to express one's disgust by words of mouth and نهر (*nahr*) is used to express it by an actual deed. So by the combination of these two words in this verse the Quran means to say that we should never speak harshly to our parents, much less act unkindly towards them.

1954. Important Words:

جناح الذل (wing of humility). جناح is derived from جنح which means, he or it inclined, leaned or propended. They say جنح الطائر i.e. the bird contracted its wings to descend and approached like one falling and repairing to a place of refuge. جنح الليل means, the night came on. جناح means wing; hand; upper arm or arm from the shoulder to the elbow; edge; side; wing of an army; protection; a part or portion of a thing. The Arabs say هو مقصوص الجناح i.e. he has his wings clipped, meaning, he lacks strength or power or ability. One would say انا فى جناح فلان i.e. I am under the protection of such a one. خفض له جناحه means, he lowered to him his wing. The Quranic expression واخفض لهما جناح الذل means, And make soft to them thy submissive side i.e. treat them with gentleness and submissiveness or lower to them the wing of submissiveness, meaning, be submissive to them (Lane & Aqrab).

ذل (*dhull*) is derived from ذل (*dhalla*) which means, he or it was or became low, abject, despicable, humble and weak; he or it (an animal) was or became easy, tractable, submissive or manageable; it (a road) was or became beaten or trodden so as to be rendered easy to walk or ride upon; it (a tank) was or became broken. ذل

26. Your Lord knows best what is in your minds: if you are righteous, then surely He is Most Forgiving to those who turn *to Him* again and again.1955

رَبُّكُمۡ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا فِیۡ نُفُوۡسِكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ
تَكُوۡنُوۡا صٰلِحِیۡنَ فَاِنَّهٗ كَانَ لِلۡاَوَّابِیۡنَ
غَفُوۡرًا ﴿۲۶﴾

27. [a]And give thou to the kinsman his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer, and squander not *thy wealth* extravagantly.1956

وَ اٰتِ ذَا الۡقُرۡبٰی حَقَّهٗ وَ الۡمِسۡكِیۡنَ
وَ ابۡنَ السَّبِیۡلِ وَ لَا تُبَذِّرۡ تَبۡذِیۡرًا ﴿۲۷﴾

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[a] 16:91; 30:39.

(*dhull*) is synonymous with ذل (*dhill*) and means, lowness; paltriness, abasement, and weakness; easiness, tractableness; submissiveness; also gentleness; and mercy. According to Imām Rāghib ذل (*dhull*) is a consequence of subjection and ذل (*dhill*) is what is after refractoriness (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The verse uses a beautiful simile to teach the Faithful to be always kind to their parents. It purports to say that as ordinarily a person can never fully repay the love and affection his parents gave him when he was yet a child, he should make up the deficiency by praying for them. The words of the prayer imply that in old age parents need to be tended as carefully and affectionately as little children are looked after in their childhood.

1955. Commentary:

This verse shows that if a person serves his parents sincerely and wholeheartedly, then God, out of His Mercy, makes up for his remissness and lapse, if any. It is to this commandment about being kind to one's parents in their old age that the Holy Prophet referred when he said, "Unfortunate is that person who got an opportunity to serve one of his parents and failed to earn God's forgiveness" (Kathīr, vol. 6, p. 61).

1956. Important Words:

تبذر (squander) is derived from بذر (*badhdhara*) which is the intensified form of بذر (*badhara*) which means, he sowed seed; he scattered seed upon the ground; he scattered or dispersed or he scattered or dispersed much; he divulged what was secret; he talked much. They say بذر الخلق i.e. He (God) scattered or dispersed mankind in the earth. بذرت الارض means, the land put forth its herbage in a scattered state. بذرالعلم means, he disseminated and diffused knowledge. بذر المال (*badhdhara*) means, he dissipated or squandered wealth by extravagant expenditure and destroyed and wasted it; he expended his wealth so largely as not to leave of it whereby he might subsist, or he expended it

28. [a]Verily, the extravagant are brothers of satans and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord.[1957]

اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ؕ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ كَفُوْرًا ﴿۲۸﴾

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[a] 6:142; 7:32; 25:68.

in acts of disobedience; or he squandered it in a way that was not right (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse declares that the relatives of a rich person are entitled to a share in his property, and so are wayfarers and poor people. A person's relatives help him in various ways to earn his wealth. For instance, 'A' succeeds in getting a highly lucrative post as the result of the good education his parents have given him, depriving their other children of a similar education. The latter, therefore, possess a right in the wealth of 'A' because he rose to his high position at their expense. It is clearly stated in 51:20 that the poor and the needy have a right to share the property of the rich.

As for the wayfarer, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that a wayfarer could claim, as of right, three days' free entertainment from the residents of a place which he might visit, and if it were denied to him, he could demand it even by reasonable force (Dāwūd*, Kitābul-At'ima*).

This injunction can only be carried out in a country where the Law of Islam is in force, for according to it the residents of a place, as a whole, are bound to act as the host to a wayfarer. If this injunction were carried into practice many of the social evils which are to be found in hotels and restaurants would disappear.

This general commandment about entertainment of guests and visitors is also eminently calculated to promote peace and goodwill among different nations. The chief cause of international strife is mutual hatred. So if the entertainment of visitors should become popular in the way in which it has been inculcated by Islam, much international hatred would disappear. Those who returned to their country after having enjoyed the hospitality of a people would naturally remain favourably inclined towards them and would be slow to pick a quarrel with them. Thus this practice would prove a good means of promoting brotherly relations between different peoples.

One meaning of the word تبذیر as shown under Important Words is, "to spend for a wrong cause." Thus, if a person gives away even his whole property for the cause of religion he will not be guilty of تبذیر for the money so spent will have been spent for a right cause.

1957. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that God has bestowed His favours upon men that they may make right use of them. A person who does not make right use of God's gifts is guilty of ingratitude to Him. He who

29. And if thou hast to turn away from them while seeking thy Lord's mercy for which thou hopest, *even then* [a]speak to them a gentle word.**1958**

وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَآءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوْهَا فَقُلْ لَّهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُوْرًا ﴿٢٩﴾

30. [b]And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor stretch it out an entire stretching, lest thou sit down blamed *or* exhausted.**1959**

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُوْلَةً إِلٰى عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُوْمًا مَّحْسُوْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

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[a]93:10-11. [b]9:34; 25:68.

squanders away his wealth, in fact, seeks to shirk the responsibilities which lie upon him in connection with its proper use.

1958. Important Words:

ميسورا (gentle) is derived from يسر i.e. he was or became gentle, docile and submissive or easy; it was or became little in quantity; paltry or of no weight or worth; he divided anything into parts or portions. They say يسرت المرأة i.e. the woman had an easy birth. The Arabs say خذ ميسورة ودع معسورة i.e. take thou what is easy and leave thou what is difficult. ميسور means, easy, kind, successful, etc. When applied to a saying or speech it means gentle. Thus the words قول ميسور mean, gentle speech (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:220.

Commentary:

The verse may have two meanings:

(a) If at all we have to turn away from our kinsmen, the poor and the destitute, it should be with the intention of rendering them help on a future occasion when God, out of His Mercy, may give us the means to do so. Even in such a case we should speak to them a word of good cheer which should comfort them.

(b) Help may sometimes be denied to a seemingly needy person when it is feared that the giving of it would have an adverse effect upon him; for instance, he may be a professional beggar or may be addicted to some bad habit.

1959. Important Words:

محسورا (exhausted) is derived from حسر which means, he was or became weary and tired. حسر الدابة means, the beast was fatigued so that it was left to remain where it was. حسر البصر means, the eye became weak and fatigued by looking for long. حسر البيت means, he swept the house. محسور means, a man who has given all that he had, so that nothing remains in his possession. Being synonymous with حسير it means, tired, fatigued or jaded by much travel; grieving or regretting most intensely (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse teaches the right way of spending one's money. One should

31. Surely, [a]thy Lord enlarges *His* provision for whom He pleases, and straitens *it for whom He pleases*. Verily, He knows *and* sees His servants full well.[1960]

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًۢا بَصِيْرًا ﴿۳۱﴾

۳ ع ۸ ۳

R. 4.

32. [b]Kill not your children for fear of poverty. It is We Who provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin.[1961]

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْۤا اَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَاِيَّاكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْـًٔا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۳۲﴾

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[a]13:27; 29:63; 30:38; 39:53. [b]6:152.

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not be so miserly as not to spend it even when there is a real and genuine need as if his hands are tied to his neck, nor should one stretch forth one's hands so openly as to squander away his wealth purposelessly. One should strike the golden mean.

The expression, *lest thou sit down blamed or exhausted,* means to say that a person who squanders away his money thoughtlessly and without purpose does not have anything left with him, so that when money is required for a real national need, he finds to his regret that he cannot contribute to it. Not only can he then not help the national cause but he loses his self-respect also; and by thus falling in the estimation of his compatriots he becomes permanently deprived of the opportunity to serve his country or community in the hour of its need.

1960. Commentary:

The verse means to say that God grants plenty to some and straitens the means of livelihood for others. He does so that He may see whether those upon whom He has bestowed wealth help those who are poor and needy. The verse teaches the supreme lesson that money spent in helping and serving the poor is money well spent. The enlarging of provision by God and the straitening of it by Him do not imply an arbitrary action but refer to a wise system of divine laws.

It is worthy of note that these commandments regarding the right use of money were given to Muslims in Mecca at a time when they could not earn even as much as to make both ends meet and when many of them were actually starving. Could such commandments be given to a persecuted and starving people by anyone except the All-Powerful God Who knew that the time was soon coming when those very starving Muslims would become wealthy and powerful?

1961. Important Words:

املاق (poverty) is the noun-infinitive

from ملق. They say ملق الشيء i.e. he effaced or blotted out the thing. املق الرجل means, the man spent his money so much that he became poor. املق الثوب means, he washed the cloth. They say املق الدهر ماله i.e. time took away his money from his hands. املاق means, to be or grow poor; poverty (Aqrab).

Commentary:

V. 29 enjoins the giving of wealth in charity but not in a way as to do moral injury to the recipient or to involve the giver himself in pecuniary trouble. The verse under comment condemns the begrudging of adequate funds or means for the proper education and upbringing of children and calls it a form of killing. It does not, however, refer to the Arab custom of killing girls, which is dealt with elsewhere and which is nowhere said to be due to the fear of spending money on them. Girls were slain because their birth was looked upon as a source of disgrace and humiliation for their parents (16:59, 60 & 43:18).

Evidently there hardly lives a person so foolish as actually to kill his children in order to save his money. But there is no dearth of persons even among the so-called educated and cultured classes who "kill" their children by not giving them proper food or clothing. Children of miserly parents fall victim to various kinds of diseases because they are not given the food which is essential for the proper building up of strong and healthy bodies. These children die prematurely from malnutrition. This refusal to provide proper nourishment for them is as good as killing them and has been so called.

Taking the word قتل (killing) in a figurative sense those miserly parents who do not give proper education to their children contribute to the latter's moral and intellectual death. The verse under comment very strongly condemns such "killing" of innocent children who, if given right kind of education and also afforded proper opportunities to rise to their full stature are capable of becoming very useful members of society. It exhorts Muslims not to spare money to equip their children physically and morally for a successful and respectable life.

The word قتل (killing) has been used in the verse in order forcibly to draw attention to the various indirect ways in which some parents cause the death of their children. One such form of killing is to neglect to provide proper nourishment for pregnant women or exact heavy tasks from them during their pregnancy or in the period of suckling, which has a very adverse effect on the health of the child. By using this word the Quran emphatically has drawn attention to all those direct or indirect causes that lead to the ruining of the physical or moral health of children.

The killing of children may also take the form of birth control which, however, is permissible if, for instance, by conception the life of a pregnant woman is considered, by competent medical authority, to be in danger in the event of her giving birth to a child. The words خطأ (*khiṭ'an*) and خطأ (*khaṭ'an*) differ in their significance), the former being

33. [a]And come not near unto adultery; surely, it is a foul thing and an evil way.[1962]

وَلَا تَقۡرَبُوا الزِّنٰۤی اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۳۳﴾

34. [b]And kill not the soul which Allah has forbidden save for just cause. And whoso is killed

وَلَا تَقۡتُلُوا النَّفۡسَ الَّتِیۡ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ وَمَنۡ قُتِلَ مَظۡلُوۡمًا فَقَدۡ جَعَلۡنَا

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[a]25:69. [b]6:152; 25:69.

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intentional, while the latter may both be intentional or unintentional (Aqrab). The Quran has used the former word to bring home the fact that the killing of children is a crime at which human nature recoils and only a person devoid of all human feelings is capable of committing it. The expression ان قتلهم كان خطأ كبيرا also indicates that it is not killing by a lethal weapon or by poisoning or other similar means that is meant here. This latter kind of killing has been clearly mentioned in v. 34.

1962. Commentary:

The commandment forbidding "the killing of children" is followed by another equally weighty injunction about adultery, because adultery also causes the death of innumerable children, for to prevent pregnancy contraceptives are used and if despite precaution pregnancy does take place, abortion is resorted to. All these are different forms of infanticide. Moreover, the proper bringing up of children born of such immoral unions is neglected, thus causing their moral death.

Unlike the Biblical commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery", the Quran says, "Come not near unto adultery", which is clearly a more comprehensive and more effective commandment. The Quran not only prohibits and condemns the actual act of adultery but seeks to close and shut all those avenues that lead to it, such as free and promiscuous intermingling of the sexes. Purdah, which forbids women to display the beauty of their person or dress to men not their near relatives, and sundry other preventive measures prescribed by Islam effectively check this fell moral disease from spreading. Compared with the Quranic injunctions the teaching of the Bible is altogether ineffective and cannot, and has actually failed to, check the spread of this most heinous of all social crimes in the West. The Quranic injunction that even the occasions and places which are calculated ultimately to lead to the commission of sin must be avoided, applies as much to persons of very strong as to those of weak moral calibre. Whereas the latter class of people are bidden to avoid going near the places of sin lest they actually fall into it, those who can withstand temptations are commanded to avoid them in order that many others morally not so wrongfully, We have surely given his heir authority *to demand retaliation*, but let him not exceed the *prescribed* bounds in slaying; for *therein* he is helped *by law*.[1963]

لِوَلِيِّهٖ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِّي الْقَتْلِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مَنْصُوْرًا ۝٣٤

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strong may be saved, by their example, from falling into sin.

1963. Commentary:

In the preceding two verses reference was made to the two indirect ways of killing. The verse under comment, however, speaks of direct murder. It declares it unlawful to kill a soul, the killing of which has been forbidden by God.

The word نفس (soul) means anything which breathes and therefore includes all living things. So the words, *which Allah has forbidden*, have been added in order to restrict their application to man, it being lawful to kill other animals except under certain conditions when their killing also is forbidden.

The word ولى (heir) is applied to any person who is entitled to inherit another man's property after the latter's death. But one may nominate a person other than his legal heir as his ولى. If a person is murdered, his ولى (heir) has the right to demand satisfaction. But after the murderer is convicted by a properly constituted court, the heir of the murdered person has the right either to have the murderer legally executed or accept blood-money in lieu of the death of the murdered person. If, however, it is considered against the interests of public peace or morality to allow blood money to the heir or if the demand of the heir be found to be not bona fide, the court may refuse to accept the option of the heir and order the murderer's execution. In fact, both the heir and the State equally share the right to pardon or punish the guilty person. This right of the State in regard to the punishment of the guilty person covers all matters to which the injunction of قصاص (retaliation) applies. The Caliph 'Alī is reported to have punished a guilty person whom the aggrieved party had pardoned on the plea that the dictates of public peace demanded his punishment. 'Alī was convinced that the fear of being harmed by the offender had made the aggrieved person pardon him. See also 2:179.

Whereas in the earlier part of the verse the rights of the party offended against have been safeguarded, the words, *let him not exceed the prescribed bounds in slaying*, safeguard the interests of the offender. They mean to say that the aggrieved party should not exceed legitimate bounds by adopting a cruel method of killing. In fact, these words imply a recommendation in favour of the murderer. They also show that although "life for life" is the general rule, the heirs of the murdered person may not always act

35. [a]And come not near the property of the orphan, except in the best way, until he attains his maturity, and [b]fulfil the covenant; for the covenant shall be questioned about.**1964**

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ
اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۪ وَاَوْفُوْا
بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ اِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿۳۵﴾

[a]4:7, 11; 6:153. [b]5:2; 16:92.

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upon this rule. The murderer is to suffer the extreme penalty of the law only when the dictates of equity, retaliation, public peace and morality absolutely demand it. His life should be spared if this act of grace is calculated to lead to his moral reformation. In the words, *for therein he is helped by law*, the aggrieved person is reminded of his responsibilities. He is told that he, too, is responsible for the maintenance of peace. As God has safeguarded his rights, he should have regard for the rights of others—he should not always insist upon his "pound of flesh".

1964. Commentary:

Besides the every-day incidence of death, sudden and accidental happenings, among which may be included epidemics, murders, etc. leave children orphans. Hence, after having laid down the law about the punishment of murder, which leaves orphans in two families—in the family of the murderer and that of the murdered person—the Quran proceeds to give directions about the rights of orphans. One of the most important of these is with regard to their property.

The present verse clearly lays down that the property of orphans is to be handled in such a way that it may increase and produce the best results for them. In this as in many other respects the teaching of Islam is clearly superior to that of other religions. In no other religious system have such detailed instructions been given to safeguard the property of orphans as are given by Islam. The present verse institutes, as it were, a general Court of Wards, a department designed for the protection of the property of orphaned minors. It is generally considered to be a western institution, but it was conceived and brought into being by Islam no less than 1350 years ago.

The words, *until he attains his maturity*, signify that the guardianship of orphans' property is not to be given up before they are physically and mentally mature enough to take proper care of it; nor is it to be retained a minute longer after that.

The word عهد (covenant) also means an obligation and it has been used here in this sense to emphasize the fact that taking proper care of orphans' property constitutes no favour to them but is a responsibility and a duty to be discharged fully and honestly. Orphans are powerless to

36. [a]And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is best and most commendable in the end.**1965**

وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ اِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوْا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّاَحْسَنُ تَاْوِيْلًا ﴿۳۶﴾

37. [b]And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge. [c]Verily, the ear and the eye and the heart—all these shall be called to account.**1966**

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ اِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾

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[a]7:86; 11:85-86; 26:182,183; 55:10. [b]11:47. [c]24:25; 36:66; 41:21-23.

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call their guardians to account if the latter are found to be guilty of fraudulence with regard to their property. So God has given their charge the status of a divine covenant the breach of which will be severely punished.

This word عهد, however, may possess a wider significance. It may refer to the responsibility that devolves upon a powerful nation which takes under its protection a weaker sister nation. Such a powerful nation is reminded that it can keep under its tutelage the weaker nation only till that time when the latter "comes of age" and is fit to take charge of its affairs. The weaker nation is here likened to an orphan whose period of tutelage is a sacred trust which the stronger nation is directed to discharge honestly "until it attains its maturity." The verse thus possesses an object lesson for the Western Mandatory Powers.

1965. Commentary:

The verse points to the fact that the secret of the commercial progress and prosperity of a people lies in honest and fair dealing in commercial transactions.

1966. Commentary:

This verse cuts at the root of all sources of suspicion. These sources in their natural order are "the ear", "the eye" and "the heart". "The ear" is the first avenue through which most suspicions enter man's mind. As a rule suspicions are caused by ill-founded reports which one hears about another person. Next to hearing comes the source of sight. A person sees another doing a certain act and interprets it wrongly and is led to suspect the latter's motives and intentions. The last and most degraded kind of suspicion is that which a person entertains about another not as the result of a bad report which he might have heard about him nor in consequence of a bad act or deed which he might have seen him doing but which is purely the figment of his own diseased mind. Muslims are enjoined to steer clear of all these forms of suspicion. They are

38. [a]And walk not in the earth haughtily, for thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou reach the mountains in height.[1967]

وَلَا تَمۡشِ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ مَرَحًا ۚ اِنَّکَ لَنۡ تَخۡرِقَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَلَنۡ تَبۡلُغَ الۡجِبَالَ طُوۡلًا ﴿۳۸﴾

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[a] 31:19.

the enemy of all cordial social relations.

The verse draws attention to the fact that it is not only human life and property (to which a reference has already been made in the preceding verse) which are sacred and inviolable; human honour also is sacrosanct and an attack upon it also will have to be accounted for.

A person will be called to account for having listened to anything about another person which he had no right to do. Similarly, he will be brought to book for having seen something which he should not have seen. And so will he be punished for harbouring in his mind evil thoughts about other people. We are told that our impressions and opinions should not be based on mere hearsay and surmise but on sure knowledge. Mere evidence of the ear, the eye or the heart is not sufficient to condemn a person or form an adverse opinion about him but sure knowledge based on thorough enquiry. Mark the high moral tone of these teachings!

1967. Commentary:

The teaching given in the previous verses pertained to our relations with other individuals or with God. The moral precepts which this verse proceeds to lay down concern our own selves. First of all we are bidden not to be proud of and exult over our achievements, for such an attitude makes us content with what we have already achieved and is thus calculated to impede and arrest our moral progress. The words, *thou canst not rend the earth nor canst thou reach the mountains in height*, remind us that after all our successes and achievements are limited, and there is no sense in our losing our heads over what is so limited. In spite of all our achievements, real or imaginary, we, have to live on this earth and among its people. We should not therefore behave in such a manner as to make ourselves intolerable to others. A proud man's life is generally very bitter. In every-day life he cannot do without the help and assistance of those among whom he lives and yet he disdains their cooperation. This contrariness and irreconcilability of attitude and feelings renders his life bitter and makes him unacceptable to others.

Taking the word جبال (mountains) in the sense of "leaders" or "learned men", which is also one of its so many meanings, the verse seems to administer a subtle rebuke to the haughty and the arrogant that they cannot attain that height of greatness and honour among their people which

39. The evil of all these is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.[1968]

كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ
مَكْرُوْهًا ۝٣٩

40. This is part of that wisdom which thy Lord has revealed to thee. [a]And set not up with Allah any other god, lest thou be cast into Hell, condemned *and* rejected.[1969]

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّآ اَوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ
الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ
فَتُلْقٰى فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ مَلُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ۝٤٠

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[a] 17:23; 26:214; 28:89.

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these two classes of men reach by their knowledge and service, and yet these pillars of learning are the models of humility and humaneness.

1968. Commentary:

In this verse, which speaks of the dark or evil side of things, a vast store of knowledge has been compressed in a very brief sentence. It purports to say that nothing in this world may be described as absolutely good or bad. Every action has its good or evil aspect. It is the circumstances under which it is done that make it good or bad. Belief in the Unity of God, for instance, is a virtue, but if one makes it a cause of mischief and begins to abuse other people's gods, it will become an evil. Similarly, it is a virtue to be obedient to one's parents, but if one begins to commit acts of injustice or worship deities other than Allah at their bidding, obedience to them becomes an evil act. Again, it is an act of virtue to abstain from killing but if one should, on that ground, abstain from fighting in defence of one's country or oppose the killing of a person who has been sentenced to death by a properly constituted court of law, his conduct will be considered reprehensible; and so on and so forth. A Muslim is, therefore, expected to understand and realize the reality and true significance of God's commandments and to use his God-given gifts, powers and faculties on proper occasions in accordance with the exigencies of time and circumstance and the dictates of reason. Every natural faculty has a good or bad use and it is only the improper use of those faculties that is called evil and is forbidden by God. How true and comprehensive is this definition of good and bad actions but how few people really understand it!

1969. Commentary:

In 16:126 we were told that a number of commandments full of wisdom would be given soon. The present verse purports to say that a few of these wise Divine commandments have already been mentioned in the previous verses. In v. 23. great stress was laid on توحید (Oneness of God). In the following verses the practical implications of

41. [a]Has, then, your Lord honoured you with sons, and taken for Himself females from among the angels? Surely, you say a grievous saying.1970

اَفَاَصۡفٰىكُمۡ رَبُّكُمۡ بِالۡبَنِيۡنَ وَ اتَّخَذَ مِنَ الۡمَلٰٓـئِكَةِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اِنَّكُمۡ لَتَقُوۡلُوۡنَ قَوۡلًا عَظِيۡمًا ؏ ﴿۴۱﴾

ع ٤ ١٠ ٤

R. 5.

42. [b]We have explained *the truth* in the Quran in various ways that they may be admonished, but it only increases them in aversion.1971

وَلَقَدۡ صَرَّفۡنَا فِىۡ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوۡا ؕ وَمَا يَزِيۡدُهُمۡ اِلَّا نُفُوۡرًا ﴿۴۲﴾

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[a]37:151; 43:20; 52:40. [b]17:90; 18:55.

the Islamic conception of توحید and the great moral and spiritual benefits that mankind has derived from this concept were explained. In the verse under comment, however, توحید is considered from another standpoint, the injury that its antithesis—idolatry (شرک) does to human intellect. A polytheist naturally feels self-condemned and realizes the untenability of his position before a believer in the Oneness of God because he knows that he possesses no solid argument to support his belief. Thus he can never enjoy real peace of mind.

1970. Commentary:

This verse gives an illustration of the mental confusion and lack of intellectual poise of polytheists. For instance, some of them say that angels are God’s daughters and they worship them although they themselves regard daughters to be a source of shame and humiliation.

1971. Important Words:

صرفنا (We have explained the truth in various ways). صرف (*Ṣarrafa*) is the intensified form of صرف (*Ṣarafa*). صرفه means, he turned, sent or put him away or back from his way or course. صرف الشیء (*Ṣarrafa*) means, he employed the thing in more than one way. صرف الکلام means, he derived one part of the speech from another. تصریف is the turning from one state or condition to another or from one direction or course or way to another. تصریف الایات signifies the varying of the Quranic verses by repeating them in different forms (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The objection is generally raised against the Quran that it unnecessarily repeats its subjects. This objection has been answered in this verse. According to the two meanings of the word صرفنا given under Important Words, the verse would mean, (a) that the Quran refutes all possible objections raised against its principles and teachings and (b) that it discusses all important subjects from all conceivable points of view. For a book which has to deal

43. Say, had there been other gods with Him, as they say, then they (idolaters) would have surely sought out a way to the Owner of the Throne.[1972]

قُلۡ لَّوۡ كَانَ مَعَهٗۤ اٰلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِذًا لَّابۡتَغَوۡا اِلٰى ذِى الۡعَرۡشِ سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۴۳﴾

44. [a]Holy is He, and exalted far above that which they say.[1973]

سُبۡحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيۡرًا ﴿۴۴﴾

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[a] 6:101; 39:68.

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exhaustively with all questions of importance it is quite natural and even necessary that it should revert, time and again, to the relevant points which bear on the main theme. No reasonable person can call this repetition. Repetition is objectionable only when it serves no useful purpose, but when it is intended to throw light upon a question from a new angle of vision or to refute a new objection no sane and intelligent person can object to it.

1972. Commentary:

This verse furnishes an illustration of the fact that when the Quran reverts to a subject it does so to deal with it in a new light. The verse has reverted to the subject of setting up equals with God. But here it gives quite a new argument in its refutation. It demolishes the claim of idolaters that they worship their idols to seek nearness to God through their mediation (39:4) by saying that if by this worship they had really sought nearness to God, they should have achieved this object but there are no signs of any one of them ever having attained nearness to God.

Incidentally some light may be thrown on some of the signs and marks which a person who has established real connection with God must possess: (a) his prayers are accepted; (b) he becomes very much immune from sin or indulgence in vain discourse; (c) he enjoys a sort of Divine protection and (d) he treats God's creatures with kindness and benevolence and lives peacefully and amicably with them, i.e. he is at peace with God and man. Idolaters are completely devoid of all these characteristics of God's beloved and His Elect.

The expression, *they (idolaters) would have surely sought out a way to the Owner of the Throne*, may also be understood to mean that if the false gods of idolaters had possessed any truth or power, then with their help idolaters would have learnt from the Supreme Lord of the Throne some way or means to counteract and nullify the Holy Prophet's efforts. The fact, therefore, that the Prophet marched from success to success and all their schemes and machinations failed to impede his progress furnishes proof positive of the fact that these so-called gods possess no truth or power.

1973. Commentary:

It is inconsistent with the dignity and greatness of God to grant

45. [a]The seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory; and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise; but you understand not their glorification. Verily, He is Forbearing, Most Forgiving.[1974]

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمٰوٰتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْاَرْضُ
وَمَنْ فِيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حَلِيْمًا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

46. And when thou recitest the Quran, We put between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter a hidden veil;[1975]

وَاِذَا قَرَاْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ
الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ حِجَابًا
مَّسْتُوْرًا ۙ﴿٤٦﴾

47. [b]And We put coverings over their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears a deafness. [c]And when thou

وَّجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ
يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِذَا

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[a]24:42; 59:25; 61:2; 62:2; 64:2. [b]6:26; 18:58; 41:6. [c]39:46.

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nearness to His creatures through the medium of others and thus make difficult the path of those who seek His nearness. The Prophets of God come to make that path easy. They do not stand between God and His creatures.

1974. Commentary:

The expression, the seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory, refers to the collective evidence that the whole universe bears to the Unity of God, while the words, and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise, refer to the evidence which everything bears to that Unity individually and separately. The former expression means that the beautiful arrangement and order existing in the universe shows unmistakably that its Creator is One and the latter means that everything in this universe, within its own limited sphere and in its own inimitable way, demonstrates God's various attributes.

1975. Commentary:

The 'veil' mentioned in this verse is the veil sometime of malice and envy, at another time of a false sense of dignity and racial pride, at yet another time of the fear of loss of social position and income, or again it is the veil of a long-standing custom and belief fondly and firmly held that stands in the way of the acceptance of truth by disbelievers, etc. It is a hidden veil which disbelievers themselves do not clearly see and appreciate.

makest mention in the Quran of thy Lord alone, they turn their backs in aversion.[1976]

ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْاٰنِ وَحْدَهٗ
وَلَّوْا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهِمْ نُفُوْرًا ﴿۴۷﴾

48. We know best what they listen for, when they listen to thee, and when they confer in private, when the wrongdoers say, [a]‘You follow none but a man who is a victim of deception.’[1977]

نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ بِهٖٓ
اِذْ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ وَاِذْ هُمْ نَجْوٰٓى
اِذْ يَقُوْلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا
رَجُلًا مَّسْحُوْرًا ﴿۴۸﴾

49. [b]See, how they coin similitudes for thee, and have thus gone astray so that they cannot find a way.[1978]

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوْا لَكَ الْاَمْثَالَ
فَضَلُّوْا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۴۹﴾ ع

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[a] 25:9. [b] 25:10.

1976. Commentary:

It has been made abundantly clear elsewhere in the Quran that the "coverings" over the hearts of disbelievers and the "deafness" in their ears are of their own creation. It is the result of their own perversity and wrongdoing (2:27, 28 & 47:25). Disbelievers, in fact, are the architects of their own evil destiny.

The words, *when thou makest mention in the Quran of thy Lord alone,* mean that disbelievers cannot discard the coverings over their hearts because the mention of the Unity and Oneness of God is so repugnant to them that they turn their backs in aversion and refuse to listen when it is being mentioned.

1977. Commentary:

The expression نحن اعلم بما يستمعون به means that God knows full well the object of disbelievers in listening to the Holy Prophet. They listen to him in order to reject him and find fault with him. The expression may also mean that God is fully aware of the mental attitude of disbelievers to the Holy Prophet. They listen to him in a spirit of mockery and hostility.

The verse refers to some of the 'coverings' over the hearts of disbelievers, e.g. (a) they hold idolatrous beliefs; (b) they listen to the Quran in order to mock at it; (c) they look upon the Prophet as too weak to lead a successful movement; (d) they regard him as a victim of deception and (e) they consider him mad. All these various causes of the rejection of the Prophet by disbelievers are implied in the word مسحور (a victim of deception), which possesses a variety of meanings.

1978. Important Words:

ضربوالكالامثال (coin similitudes for thee).

50. And they say, [a]'When we shall have become bones and broken particles, shall we be really raised up as a new creation?'[1979]

وَقَالُوْۤا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا ۝٥٠

51. Say, 'Be ye stones or iron,[1980]

قُلْ كُوْنُوْا حِجَارَةً اَوْ حَدِيْدًا ۝٥١

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[a] 17:99; 23:83; 37:17; 56:48.

Among a multitude of its meanings the word ضرب means, he described or rehearsed; he declared, propounded or explained; he made, caused to be, or constituted; he coined, quoted or made use of. ضرب مثلا means, he rehearsed, propounded or declared a parable, a similitude, an example or a proverb; he mentioned or set forth a parable; or he framed a parable. The Quranic expression واضرب لهم مثلا اصحاب القرية means, And propound thou to them or make thou to them a parable or similitude or an example of the people of the town (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:274 & 4:35.

امثال (similitudes) is the plural of مثل (*mathal*) or مثل (*mithal*). See also 13:7 & 14:46.

Commentary:

The plural noun امثال (similitudes) shows that the word, مسحور (a victim of deception) in the previous verse is to be taken in all its different senses. If the word had been used only in one sense, the singular form مثل (*mathal*) and not the plural form امثال (*amthāl*) would have been used.

The passage provides an illustration of the fact that when the Quran uses a certain word denoting a number of different senses it means that the word should be understood in all such senses as may be relevant to the context.

1979. Important Words:

رفاتا (broken particles). They say رفته i.e. he broke it; or broke it in pieces; he crushed, bruised, brayed or pounded it; he crumbled it or broke it into small pieces with his hand. رفت عنقه means, he broke or crushed his neck. They say رفت الماء العطش i.e. the water broke the vehemence of thirst. رفات means, an old and decayed bone; or anything broken in pieces, crushed or crumbled or broken into small pieces; or broken or crumbled particles. The words ءاذا كنا عظاما ورفاتا mean, when we shall have become bones and broken particles (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In the preceding verses it was mentioned how believers would attain prosperity both in this life and in the next and disbelievers would suffer punishment. This verse gives expression to the very natural wonder and amazement of disbelievers that they would ever be raised to a new life after they had been dead.

1980. Commentary:

The verse may either be taken as saying to disbelievers that even if

52. Or created matter of any kind which appears hardest in your minds, *even then shall you be raised up*.' [a]Then will they ask, 'Who shall restore us to life?' Say, 'He Who created you the first time.' They will then shake their heads at thee and say, [b]'When will it be?' Say, 'Maybe it is nigh,**1981**

أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ ۚ
فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَنْ يُّعِيْدُنَا ۖ قُلِ الَّذِيْ
فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ فَسَيُنْغِضُوْنَ
إِلَيْكَ رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هُوَ ۖ
قُلْ عَسٰٓى أَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٥٢﴾

53. *It will be* on the day when He will call you; then will you respond praising Him and you will think that [c]you have tarried but a little while.'**1982**

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ
وَتَظُنُّوْنَ إِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٥٣﴾ ع ١٢

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[a]36:79-80. [b]34:30; 36:49; 67:26. [c]20:105; 23:114-115.

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their hearts should become hard like iron or stone or any other similar substance, God would bring about among them that wholesome change which He had decreed to bring about through the Holy Prophet. Or it may be taken as answering their doubts about resurrection mentioned in the previous verse and says to them that they could not escape Divine punishment even if they became converted into iron or stone or any other hard substance.

It may be inferred from this verse that after the lapse of a long time one substance may become transformed into quite a new one. Coal becomes transformed into diamond and forests of petrified trees have been discovered in some parts of the globe. Similarly, it is not impossible that the human body, after having remained buried in the earth for a long time, may possibly become transformed into stone or iron or some other substance, though geological research has so far made no such discovery.

1981. Commentary:

The expression, *Who shall restore us to life*, does not mean that disbelievers really enquire as to who will bring them to life again. It only signifies that they ridicule the very idea of their being restored to a new life.

The words, *maybe it is nigh*, signify that the resurrection promised to disbelievers in this verse is not the one which will take place after death, but the one which was to take place shortly in their lives. This prophecy was fulfilled after the Fall of Mecca when the whole of Arabia embraced Islam. Those who were spiritually dead were restored to a new life.

1982. Commentary:

This verse confirms the

R. 6.

54. [a]And say to My servants that they should speak that which is best. Surely, Satan stirs up discord among them. [b]Surely, Satan is an open enemy to man.[1983]

وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوا الَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ ؕ
اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ يَنْزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ
كَانَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۵۴﴾

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[a]16:126; 23:97; 41:35. [b]7:201; 12:101; 41:37.

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interpretation of the previous verse viz. that the resurrection referred to is the one which took place in Arabia after the Fall of Mecca when the whole country responded to the call of God and His Prophet with a feeling of thanksgiving and Divine glorification.

The words, *and you will think that you have tarried but a little while*, mean that disbelievers would realize that the victory of Islam was not a distant consummation, as wrongly imagined by them, but an event close at hand. Another sense implied in the words is that on that day they would feel that the period of their lives spent in ignorance and opposition to Islam was wasted and that their real lives had begun only with their acceptance of Islam. Similarly, the Faithful would also look back with satisfaction upon the days they had spent in adversity and privation and would regard their bitter experiences of the past as a dream. The words 'a little while' do not, in fact, refer to the length of any period of time, but to the nature of the emotion which the memory of those days will awaken in the minds of believers as well as disbelievers.

1983. Commentary:

In v. 16:126 which was actually revealed after the *Sūrah* under comment in order of revelation, we have, *call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and reason with them in a way that is best.* The order in which the three precepts to be followed in preaching have been mentioned in these words has been closely observed in the teaching given in the present *Sūrah*. This constitutes a strong argument in favour of the contention that the chapters and verses of the Quran have been arranged in an intelligent order and not placed haphazard. Verses 24-40 of the present *Sūrah* embody some of the excellent teachings of the Quran and end with the words, *this is part of that wisdom which thy Lord has revealed to thee* (v. 40). These words correspond to the first injunction contained in 16:126, viz. *call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom*. Verses 40-53 begin with the theme "set not up with Allah any other god" and proceed to give teachings concerning the Unity of God. This corresponds to the second precept contained in 16:126 and is expressed by the words "goodly exhortation." A discourse on the

55. Your Lord knows you best. [a]If He please, He will have mercy on you; or if He please, He will punish you. [b]And We have not sent thee to be a keeper over them.[1984]

رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يَرْحَمْكُمْ اَوْ
اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ ؕ وَمَاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَكِيْلًا ﴿۵۵﴾

56. And thy Lord knows best those that are in the heavens and the earth. [c]And We exalted some of the Prophets over the others, and to David We gave a Book.[1985]

وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيّٖنَ
عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا ﴿۵۶﴾

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[a]2:285; 3:129; 5:41; 29:22. [b]6:108; 39:42; 42:7. [c]2:254; 27:16.

Unity of God makes a natural appeal to the sentiments of man. The third principle mentioned in 16:126 was, *reason with them in a way that is best*. This corresponds to the third injunction, beginning with the verse under comment, viz. *say to My servants that they should speak that which is best.*

The verse also contains the hint that if Muslims desire to hasten the day of the spiritual resurrection referred to in the previous verse when the whole of Arabia would become Muslim, they should adopt a manner of discourse best calculated to help disbelievers accept Islam.

1984. Commentary:

God alone knows the innermost secrets of man's heart and therefore He has reserved for Himself the right to punish or reward man. This work has not been entrusted even to the Holy Prophet. God Himself will deal with men according to the state of their minds.

1985. Commentary:

The verse means to say that not only does God know all those peoples to whom Messengers were sent at different times and how they received the Divine Message but He knows also all the Prophets whether dead (in the heavens) or living (in the earth). He is aware of their stations and grades as well. He knows also what kind of a Prophet is needed at a particular time. In this connection special mention has been made of the Prophet David in order to warn Muslims that, like the Israelites who were punished after him for their iniquities and transgressions, they will be punished if they behave like them.

Muslims, however, did not profit by this timely warning. The power of the Israelites was broken by Nebuchadnezzar and all their glory departed. Similarly, the great and glorious Muslim Empire of Baghdad was destroyed by Hulagu Khan and

57. [a]Say, ‘Call on those whom you think *to be gods* beside Him’; then *you will know that* they have no power to remove affliction from you or to avert it.**1986**

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيْلًا ﴿۵۷﴾

58. Those whom they call on *themselves* seek nearness to their Lord—*even* those of them who are nearest—and hope for His mercy, and fear His punishment. Surely, the punishment of thy Lord is a thing to be feared.**1987**

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيْلَةَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَتَهٗ وَيَخَافُوْنَ عَذَابَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُوْرًا ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a]22:74; 25:4; 34:23.

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the Abbasid glory and pomp vanished, leaving the Muslim world in mourning.

1986. Commentary

In this verse idolaters are told that they can judge the truth or falsity of their faith from the prophecies that foretell their destruction and the eventual triumph of Islam. Let them pray to their gods to save them if they can from the threatened Divine punishment. Far from saving their votaries from Divine punishment, these gods do not possess the power even to postpone or defer it for a single day. While idolaters are admonished that idolatry is at the root of all their misfortunes Muslims are warned that idolatry will bring about their downfall also. It is worthy of note that one of the major causes of the decline, downfall and destruction of the Abbasid Empire of Baghdad was that Muslim nobles freely married Turkish and Iranian idolatrous women. This led to the growth and spread of idolatrous beliefs among Muslims. Ibn Muqanna‘ and Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāḥ were the product of the idolatrous ideas and practices that were rampant in those days among Muslims.

1987. Important Words:

ايهم (those of them who). اى is a noun used in five different senses. (1) It means, who? which? and what? They say ايهم اخوک i.e. who or which of them is thy brother? In the Quran we have فباى حديث بعده يومنون i.e. And in what announcement after it will they believe? (2) It denotes a condition. They say ايهم يكرمنى اكرمه i.e. whichever of them treats me with honour, I will treat him with honour. (3) It is a conjunct noun; and is sometimes used in the manner of الذى and therefore

59. [a]There is not a township but We shall destroy it before the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with a severe punishment. That is written down in the Book.[1988]

وَاِنۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اِلَّا نَحۡنُ مُهۡلِكُوۡهَا قَبۡلَ
يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ اَوۡ مُعَذِّبُوۡهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيۡدًا ؕ
كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِى الۡكِتٰبِ مَسۡطُوۡرًا ﴿۵۹﴾

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[a] 21:12; 22:46; 28:59.

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requires a complement; as in the Quranic verse ثم لننزعن من كل شيعة ايهم اشد على الرحمان عصيا i.e. Then We will assuredly draw forth from every sect those of them who are most exorbitantly rebellious against the Compassionate God (4) It denotes perfection or consummation and in this case it is an epithet applying to an indeterminate noun. They say زید رجل ای رجل i.e. Zaid is a man; what a man! (5) It is also a connective of the vocative يا with the noun signifying the person or persons called, when this noun has the article ال prefixed to it; and with a noun of indication, as ذا; and with a conjunct noun having ال prefixed to it, as الذی it is a noun formed for serving as such a connective; and has ها affixed to it. They say يا ايها الرجل i.e. O thou man or O thou, the man, or O thou who art the man (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse may be interpreted in two ways: (1) The pronoun اولئك (those) may be taken as referring to the Prophets mentioned in v. 56. In this case the verse would mean that those Prophets always invited people to the worship of the One God, sought His nearness and feared His punishment. (2) The pronoun اولئك may refer to the gods of the idolaters, the latter (idolaters) being taken as subject of the verb يدعون (they call on). In this case the verse would mean, those whom the idolaters call upon beside God themselves seek His nearness and pleasure and fear His punishment.

1988. Commentary:

In the previous verse it was stated that false deities could not save their devotees from Divine punishment. The present verse gives a specific illustration of this. It purports to say that the time was coming when idolatry would spread all over the world and in consequence thereof the whole of mankind would suffer for its sins and iniquities. At that time no human device and no seeking of help from false deities would save their devotees from Divine wrath. This subject has been dealt with at greater length in the next *Sūrah*.

The verse contains a warning for Muslims to beware of "the second great punishment" to which an allusion has already been made in v. 57. The words "before the Day of Resurrection" allude to a prophecy which was to be fulfilled in the latter days. From the Ḥadīth it appears that this prophecy about "the second

60. [a]And nothing could hinder Us from sending Signs, except that the former people rejected them, *but this is no hindrance*. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel as a clear Sign, but they unjustly rejected it. And We send not Signs but to warn.1989

وَمَا مَنَعَنَآ اَنْ نُّرْسِلَ بِالْاٰيٰتِ اِلَّآ اَنْ
كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ؕ وَاٰتَيْنَا ثَمُوْدَ النَّاقَةَ
مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا ؕ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ
بِالْاٰيٰتِ اِلَّا تَخْوِيْفًا ﴿٦٠﴾

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[a] 17:95; 18:56.

punishment" was to be fulfilled after the advent of the Promised Messiah, and we find that it is already being fulfilled.

1989. Important Words:

ظلموا بها (unjustly rejected it). The word ظلم means, (1) he did wrong; or acted wrongfully, unjustly or tyrannically, (2) he put a thing in a wrong place or in a place not its own. They say من اشبه اباه فما ظلم i.e. whoso resembles his father, he has not put the likeness in a wrong place; (3) he made him suffer loss as in وما ظلمونا ولكن كانوا انفسهم يظلمون i.e. and they made not Us to suffer loss or detriment but it was themselves they made to suffer loss or detriment. ظلم الارض means, he dug the ground in what was not the place of digging. ظلمه also means, he imposed upon him a thing that was above his power or ability. The word is also used transitively by means of ب as in the Quranic words فظلموا بها i.e. and they disbelieved in them (the Signs) or unjustly rejected them (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:36, 52.

Commentary:

The verse beautifully states that heavenly signs will never cease to appear. It warns Muslims not to entertain such a foolish belief and proceeds to refute and demolish the only possible objection against the appearance of heavenly signs. The objection is: When the people to whom the signs were first shown did not profit by them, where was the warrant that their successors would do so? The arguments given in refutation of this objection are: (a) If the rejection of heavenly signs had been a reasonable ground, no Prophet after the very first Prophet—Adam—would have appeared. But this did not happen and fresh Prophets continued to appear in all ages and fresh signs continued to be shown at their hands, which showed that the rejection of signs never proved a barrier in the way of the appearance of new signs. (b) Prophets are sent in the world in order to warn wrongdoers of their transgressions and iniquities and of the impending Divine punishment in consequence of those iniquities. Any such punishment without a previous warning and without showing signs would be contrary to Divine mercy.

As an illustration of the claim that

61. And *remember the time* when We said to thee: 'Surely, thy Lord has encompassed the people.' [a]And We made not the vision which We showed thee but as a trial for men, as also the tree cursed in the Quran. And We warn them, but it only increases them in great transgression.1990

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ط
وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِيْٓ أَرَيْنٰكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً
لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُوْنَةَ فِي الْقُرْاٰنِ ط
وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ ۙ فَمَا يَزِيْدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا
كَبِيْرًا ٦١ ع

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[a]17:2.

wrongdoers never go unpunished if they do not repent, special mention has been made of the tribe of Thamūd because the Thamūd were an Arab tribe and their history was a matter of common knowledge with pagan Arabs as well as with the Jews of Arabia.

1990. Important Words:

احاط بالناس (has encompassed the people). احاط is derived from حاط. They say احاط به العدو i.e. the enemy surrounded him. احيط بفلان means, such a one was destroyed or his destruction drew near. احاط به علما means, he had a comprehensive or complete knowledge thereof, or he attained the utmost knowledge thereof. The Quranic expression ان ربک احاط بالناس means, verily thy Lord hath men in His grasp or power or hath destroyed them (Lane & Aqrab).

الشجرة الملعونة (the cursed tree). شجرة is the noun infinitive from شجر. They say شجر الامر بينهم i.e. the affair was or became confused or complicated so as to be a subject of disagreement or difference between them. شجره means, he tied it. شجرة means, a tree; the stock or origin of a man. They say هو من شجرة طيبة i.e. he is of good stock or origin (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The reference in the words, *When We said to thee*, is to the Vision mentioned under v. 2 of this *Sūrah*. In that Vision the Holy Prophet saw himself leading all other Prophets in Prayers. The Vision implied that at some future time, the followers of those Prophets would join the fold of Islam. This is what is meant by the words, *Thy Lord has encompassed the people*. This general spread of Islam would follow in the wake of the worldwide disasters of which mention has been made in v. 59. The object of these disasters was to open the way for the propagation of Islam, to induce all men to rally round its banner and to demonstrate the futility of the present materialistic Western civilization to stand in its way. Some of these disasters have already taken place and others are waiting to shake the present order of things to its foundation.

R. 7.

62. [a]And *remember the time* when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they *all*

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ
فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ

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[a] 2:35; 7:12; 15:30-31; 18:51; 20:117; 38:73-75.

The signs of these impending disasters are already in evidence everywhere in the world. They will be followed by conditions favourable to the general and widespread acceptance and expansion of Islam.

Commentators of the Quran have greatly differed as to what the expression الشجرة الملعونة (the accursed tree) means. According to some of them it means شجرة خبيثة (evil tree) mentioned in 14:27. The word خبيث (evil) meaning a thing devoid of all good is synonymous with ملعون (accursed) which means, far removed from good. But the word شجرة as shown under Important Words, also means, a family. According to this meaning of the word the expression الشجرة الملعونة appears to apply more appropriately to a people—the Jewish people—who have been repeatedly mentioned in the Quran as having been cursed by God (5:14, 61, 65, 79). The curse of God has dogged the footsteps of these unfortunate people from the time of the Prophet David right down to the present time. This interpretation of the expression finds additional support from the fact that the present *Sūrah* particularly deals with the Israelites as its very name, Banī Isrā'īl, suggests. The fact that the verse begins with a mention of the Vision in which the Holy Prophet saw himself leading the Israelite Prophets in Prayers in Jerusalem, the Centre of the Jewish Faith, lends further support to the assumption that by الشجرة الملعونة (cursed tree) is meant the Jewish people.

The verse speaks both of "the vision" and the Jewish people (the accursed tree) to whom that Vision specially refers as "a trial for men". The Jews have, throughout the ages, proved a source of much misery and distress for mankind, particularly for Muslims, under whose benign rule they have enjoyed more freedom and security than under any other people. The two World Wars have been the result directly or indirectly of the plots and machinations of the Jews. They led an organized opposition to the German people in the First Great War and the Second Great War was also the result of their widespread and highly organized propaganda against Hitler. In the Russian Revolution which, too, forms a part of the Divine punishment (v. 59) the Jews took a prominent part and some of its foremost leaders are Jews by blood. The Jewish machinations have now extended to Palestine and have turned this "land of the Prophets" into a veritable hot-bed of intrigue, murder and arson. But all their intrigues and efforts to go back to, and take possession of, Palestine, will meet with only temporary success because this country has been divinely decreed to remain in Muslim hands.

submitted, except Iblīs. He said, ‘Shall I submit to one whom Thou hast created of clay?’[1991]

خَلَقْتَ طِيْنًا ۚ ﴿٦٢﴾

63. *And* he said, ‘What thinkest Thou? *Can* this [a]whom Thou hast honoured above me *be my superior*? If Thou wilt grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection, [b]I will most surely

قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَكَ هٰذَا الَّذِىْ كَرَّمْتَ عَلَىَّ ؗ
لَئِنْ اَخَّرْتَنِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَاَحْتَنِكَنَّ
ذُرِّيَّتَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٣﴾

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[a]7:13; 15:34; 38:77. [b]7:17-18; 15:40.

1991. Important Words:

لادم (to Adam). لام as حرف جاره (Preposition) is used in about twenty-two senses, the most important of which are the following: (1) It is used in the sense of فى as in من لى i.e. who is or will be for me as my defender or surety? (2) in the sense of على as in يخرون للاذقان سجدا i.e. they fall down prostrate upon their faces; (3) in the sense of بعد as in لليلة خلت i.e. after the night that has passed; (4) in the sense of لام عاقبة as in لدوا للموت وابنوا للخراب i.e. bear children that they should die and build houses that they should fall into ruins; (5) in the sense of الى as in اوحى له i.e. he revealed to him; (6) to express a right as in الحمد لله و العزة له i.e. all praise is for God and all honour is due to Him; and (7) in the sense of مع (with or in spite of) as in فلما تفرقنا كانى ومالكا لطول اجتماع لم نبت ليلة معا i.e. when we separated, I felt as if with (or in spite of) our having lived together for a long time, I and Mālik had not lived together even for one night (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The particle ل possesses, as shown under Important Words, a vast variety of meanings one of which is مع (with). In the expression لادم (to Adam) the particle ل means, "with"; thus the whole sentence اسجدوا لادم may mean, "submit to God along with Adam".

In the previous verses reference was made to the transgressions of the Jews. In order to throw further light on the subject, the verse under comment cites the case of Adam by way of example. The Prophets of God have always met with strong opposition from disbelievers. Adam who was the first Prophet was also opposed by Iblīs, who said that he was superior to him (Adam) and therefore could not render obedience to him. The same obstacle lay in the way of the Jews. They looked upon themselves as superior to the Holy Prophet and his people. They were obsessed with the idea that, being the progeny of Isaac, all the blessings promised to Abraham were to be inherited by them alone to the exclusion of their cousins, the children of Ishmael. This false and foolish notion proved a stumbling block in the way of their accepting the Holy Prophet.

bring his descendants under my sway except a few.'[1992]

64. [a]He said, 'Begone! and whoso shall follow thee from

قَالَ اذۡهَبۡ فَمَنۡ تَبِعَكَ مِنۡهُمۡ فَاِنَّ

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[a] 7:19; 15:43-44; 38:86.

1992. Important Words:

ارءیتک (what thinkest thou?) is derived from رای i.e. he saw with the eyes and means, hast thou considered? tell thou me, tell me; thinkest thou? or what thinkest thou? (Lane). See also 10:51.

لاحتنکن (I will most surely bring under my sway) is derived from حنک. They say حنک الفرس i.e. he put a rope in the mouth of the horse. احتنک الجراد الارض means, the locusts ate what was upon the land and consumed its herbage. احتنکه means, (1) he put a rope in his mouth and led him; (2) he took the whole of his property; and (3) he gained the mastery over him. The Quranic expression لاحتنکن ذریته means, I will assuredly extirpate his progeny; or I will assuredly incline his progeny to obey me, or I will assuredly gain the mastery over his progeny (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

By "resurrection" is here meant not the great Resurrection that is to take place after death but the time when believers will have achieved success and disbelievers met with discomfiture.

It may also mean the spiritual resurrection which is experienced by every believer when his faith becomes perfect and Satan ceases to exercise control over him.

Whether or not Satan has succeeded in carrying out his threat in leading astray a vast majority of mankind is an important question which calls for an answer. A hurried and thoughtless glance over the state of good and evil in the world may lead one to the wrong conclusion that evil predominates in the world. But the truth is quite the reverse. If all the utterances of the greatest of liars were to be critically examined, the number of his truthful utterances will be found to be far exceeding his lies. So is the case with other evils. A great majority of people in the world are disposed to be good and virtuous. They commit moral excesses only in the heat of passion. Similarly, the number of the wicked people in the world is much smaller than that of the good and the virtuous. The fact that wickedness attracts such wide notice in itself constitutes proof positive of the fact that human nature is innately good and recoils at even a slight touch of evil. It is therefore wrong to suppose that Satan has succeeded in carrying his threat into actual fact.

The dialogue described here and in other verses of the Quran as having taken place between God and Satan never actually took place. It is only a representation of the state of things existing in the world. See also 2:35; 7:13-19 & 15:28-29.

among them, Hell shall surely be the recompense of you all—an ample recompense.**1993**

جَهَنَّمُ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَآءً مَّوْفُوْرًا ۝٦٤

65. [a]And entice whomsoever of them thou canst, with thy voice, and urge against them thy horsemen and thy footmen and be their partner in wealth, and children, and make promises to them.' [b]And Satan promises them naught but deceit.**1994**

وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَاَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ۝٦٥

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[a]7:18. [b]4:121; 14:23.

1993. Commentary:

The verse shows that the punishment of Hell will be mental and not physical. Punishment can suit every individual case only if it is mental. No two men's mental condition is exactly alike, and if punishment be external, the same punishment cannot suit every case. It can do so only if it be mental and everybody should receive punishment according to the condition of his mind. Just as all kinds of trees receive their sustenance from the earth according to their particular needs and natures, similarly all sinners will suffer the torment of Hell according to their mental condition.

1994. Important Words:

استفزز (entice thou) is derived from فز which means, he was or became frightened. استفز means, it (fear) excited him to lightness, unsteadyness; or it unsettled him; he incited or excited him to be promptly obedient and submissive to him; he deceived or beguiled him so as to cast him into destruction; he expelled him from his land; he slew him. The Quranic expression واستفزز من استطعت منهم بصوتک means, and excite thou to lightness and unsteadiness or unsettle thou whom thou canst with thy voice. And the expression وان کادوا لیستفزونک من الارض means, and verily they were near to unsettling thee from the land or, some say, they were near to frightening thee so as to excite thee to promptness of flight from the land (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse shows that man is by nature good. It is only when he falls a victim to satanic influences that he gives up the path of virtue for the ways of sin and iniquity. This Islamic conception of human nature is in striking contrast with that of Christianity according to which man is evil by nature and Jesus alone can redeem him from his original sin.

The verse describes the three kinds of devices that are adopted by the

66. [a]*As to* My servants, thou shalt certainly have no power over them, and sufficient is thy Lord as a Guardian.**1995**

اِنَّ عِبَادِیْ لَیْسَ لَكَ عَلَیْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ ؕ وَ كَفٰی بِرَبِّكَ وَكِیْلًا ﴿۶۶﴾

67. [b]Your Lord is He Who drives for you the ships in the sea, that you may seek of His bounty. Surely, He is merciful toward you.**1996**

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِیْ یُزْجِیْ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِی الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِیْمًا ﴿۶۷﴾

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[a]15:41; 38:84. [b]14:33; 22:66; 45:13.

sons of darkness to entice men away from the right way: (1) They try to intimidate the poor and the weak by holding out threats of violence to them. This is the significance of the words, *And entice...with thy voice.* (2) They use more drastic measures against those who are not frightened away by verbal threats of violence by forming alliances against them and making a concerted attack upon them and persecuting and oppressing them in every way. This is the sense of the words, *urge against them thy horsemen and footmen.* (3) They seek to entice away the powerful and the more influential among the followers of a Prophet by offering to make them their leaders if only they give up his cause.

All these measures and stratagems have been adopted by the enemies of truth against the Prophets of God and their followers throughout the ages. But they have never succeeded in arresting or retarding the progress of truth.

1995. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that man is amenable to the enticement of Satan so long as he is not "resurrected" i.e. as long as his faith does not attain its full stature. The verse also teaches man the secret of becoming safe from the attacks of Satan. It is that he should give himself up wholly to the care and protection of God and, instead of depending upon his own resources and efforts, should rely upon Him alone, for Satan can cause no harm to one who is under the guardianship of God.

1996. Commentary:

The verse points out that all amenities of life are God’s gifts bestowed upon man, although they are not always recognized or appreciated by man as such. For example, the use of ships has made interaction possible between the dwellers of the main lands and the islands, who would have remained permanently isolated from each other without them.

There is also in the verse an implied reference to the fact that Islam will spread throughout the world on land and sea and for this purpose sea-

68. [a]And when harm touches you on the sea, *all* those whom you call upon, except Him, become lost *to you.* But when He brings you safe to land, you turn aside; and man is very ungrateful.**1997**

وَاِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ
تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىكُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ
اَعْرَضْتُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ كَفُوْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾

69. [b]Do you then feel secure that He will *not* cause you to sink in the side of the land or send against you a violent sandstorm *and* then you will find no guardian for yourselves?**1998**

اَفَاَمِنْتُمْ اَنْ يَّخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ اَوْ
يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوْا
لَكُمْ وَكِيْلًا ۙ ﴿٦٩﴾

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[a]10:13; 11:10-11; 23:65; 30:34; 39:9; 41:50-52; 70:21-22. [b]67:17-18.

going vessels, which are a great Divine blessing, will play a most important part. It is worthy of note that Muslims in the heyday of their glory were great sailors and navigators. The discovery of the sea-route to India was due to the good offices of an Arab sailor who guided some wandering Portuguese ships from the coast of Africa to the shores of India.

1997. Commentary:

Such is the nature of man that when he is in distress, he becomes humble and prays to God and promises and vows to lead a virtuous life if he were to regain his lost peace of mind. But when the danger is over, he is as arrogant and boastful as ever. The verse, in fact, embodies a warning for Muslims that they should not forget God in their days of prosperity so that He may not forget them in their time of adversity.

1998. Important Words:

حاصبا (violent sandstorm) is derived from حصب and حصبه means, he pelted him or pelted him with pebbles. They say حصبت الريح بالحصباء i.e. the wind cast or drove along small pebbles. حصب النار means, he kindled the fire. حصب (*ḥaṣabun*) means, a stone that is thrown; firewood. حاصبا means, a thrower or pelter of stones; a punishment from God; dust containing pebbles; pebbles cast about by the wind; small particles of snow and hail scattered about; a large number of men on foot. ريح حاصب means, a violent wind that raises, drives along or casts down pebbles from the sky; clouds or clouds casting down snow and hail (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse implies a prophetic allusion to the Battle of Badr which was yet to be fought. The Arabs, being an inland people, were very

70. Or, do you feel secure that He will *not* send you back therein a second time, *and* [a]then send against you as a storm-blast, and drown you because of your disbelief; you will then find therein no helper for yourselves against Us.1999

أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَن يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُم بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا ﴿٧٠﴾

71. Indeed, We have honoured the children of Adam, and carried them by land and sea, and given them of good things and exalted them far above many of those whom We have created.2000

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ ع

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[a] 67:18.

much afraid of the sea. It purports to warn the Meccan disbelievers that they were afraid of the sea but God could destroy them on land also. This happened on the battlefield of Badr where their power got a severe shaking.

The verse also seems to suggest to Muslims the benefits of sea-going, hinting that, since dangers at sea are no greater than those on land, why should they remain contented with life on land and not improve their commercial relations with other nations which is possible mainly through constant sea-voyaging?

1999. Important Words:

قاصفا (storm-blast) is active participle from قصف. They say قصف الشيء i.e. he broke the thing. قصف البعير means, the camel roared violently. قصف الرعد means, it thundered violently. ريح قاصف means, strong wind and رعد قاصف means, violent thunder (Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is strange that in fulfilment of the warning contained in this verse, some of the disbelievers were actually drowned in the Red Sea when they fled from Mecca after its conquest by the Holy Prophet.

2000. Commentary:

The verse means to say that God has equally honoured all the children of Adam and has not favoured any particular nation or tribe. It seeks to demolish all foolish notions of superiority based on colour, creed, race or nationality. It further says that all avenues of progress and prosperity have been kept open, equally for all men and these avenues lie as much in travel by land as by sea. The laying of stress on travel by sea in the Quran

R. 8.

72. *Remember* the day when We shall summon every people with their Leader. [a]Then whoso shall be given his book in his right hand—such will read their book and they will not be wronged a whit.**2001**

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوْا كُلَّ اُنَاسٍ بِاِمَامِهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَقْرَءُوْنَ كِتٰبَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

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[a] 69:20; 84:8, 9.

seems strange. The fact that an Arab, and of all Arabs the Holy Prophet, who throughout his whole life never experienced a sea voyage, should have so much emphasized the importance of sea-voyaging does indeed show that the Quran could not be his composition. He did not and could not know the great benefits of sea-voyaging.

The words, *and exalted them far above many*, may seem to suggest that man is superior only to certain species of creation and not all creation. But a little deeper reflection over the expression makes such an inference appear quite unwarranted. The verse speaks of all mankind and it is true that all men are not superior to all other creatures. There are men morally so degraded as to be worse than animals and beasts. There are others who are superior even to the angels. There are others still who are so righteous as to occupy a higher spiritual position than even the most exalted angels. In short, all men are not superior to all other creatures, but some men do top the whole creation and man as such is superior to most of the creation, for the sun, the moon, the stars, and animals have been created for him and are engaged in his service. Hence, mankind as a class is superior to most of God’s creatures, while man in his perfect spiritual state is certainly superior to the whole creation.

2001. Commentary:

The word امام (Leader) here means a spiritual Leader or a Prophet. On the Day of Judgement every people will be summoned along with their Prophet, for he will have to render an account of how he discharged his divine mission and how his people received and treated his Message (4:42; 16:85, 90; Bukhārī, *Kitābut-Tafsīr*).

According to Islam the right hand is a symbol of blessing while the left is a symbol of punishment. In the human body the right side enjoys a certain superiority over the left since the tissues of the right side generally are stronger than those of the left. The giving of the record of one’s deeds in one’s right hand as mentioned in this verse signifies that it will be a good and favourable record.

A certain preference for the right hand is a trait common among all

73. [a]But whoso is blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter, and even more astray from the way.[2002]

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِيْ هٰذِهٖٓ اَعْمٰى فَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ
اَعْمٰى وَاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ۝٧٣

races. Medical science has established the fact that the right hand of man is comparatively stronger than the left. Various explanations for this phenomenon have been offered by scientists, some of which are based on psycho-physics and others on social habits. At any rate among normal men the percentage of left-handed persons has been found to vary from 4 to 8, while among the mentally defective the percentage is much higher (Enc. Brit., 14th Edition, under Handedness).

It may well be concluded from these facts that the right hand is better suited for the performance of work than the left. So it is quite reasonable to regard the right arm as the symbol of strength. The receiving by believers of the records of works in their right hands may therefore be understood to point to the fact that they were industrious, diligent and self-sacrificing, while the receiving by disbelievers of their records in their left hands would signify that they were slow, lazy and selfish, the left hand being symbolic of weakness.

Moreover, the right hand is reserved for doing works which are generally regarded as clean while the left hand is reserved for unclean works. Thus the holding by believers of their records in their right hands would signify that their works were good and pure and the works of disbelievers were unclean and dirty as they would hold their records in their left hands.

According to some commentators of the Quran the word يمين (right hand) also signifies strength and power (69:46). According to this sense of the word the holding by believers of their records in their right hands would signify that they had taken hold of virtue with strength and resolution while the holding by disbelievers of their records in their left hands would signify that they did not strive after virtue with requisite strength and zeal.

The word يمين (right hand) also means a blessed thing as in the ḥadīth كلتا يدى ربى يمين i.e. both the hands of my Lord are full of blessings. (Biḥār, vol. 2, p. 503). In this sense the words, "whoso shall be given his book in his right hand" would symbolize that the believers’ record would be a blessed one.

The words, *such will read their book,* only point to a common habit of man. The possessor of a good record naturally reads it again and again while he whose record is bad conceals it and avoids reading it. See also v. 15 above. For the word فتيلا (a whit) see 4:50.

2002. Commentary:

The verse means to say that those

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[a] 20:125.

74. [a]And they had well-nigh caused thee *severest* affliction on account of what We have revealed to thee that thou mightest invent against Us something other than that; and then they would have certainly taken thee for a special friend.[2003]

وَاِنۡ كَادُوۡا لَيَفۡتِنُوۡنَكَ عَنِ الَّذِىۡۤ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ لِتَفۡتَرِىَ عَلَيۡنَا غَيۡرَهٗ‌ ۖ وَاِذًا لَّاتَّخَذُوۡكَ خَلِيۡلًا ﴿۷۴﴾

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[a] 10:16; 68:10.

who do not make proper use of their spiritual eyes in this world would remain deprived of spiritual sight in the life to come. The Quran speaks of those who do not ponder over the Signs of God and do not benefit by them as "blind." Such men will remain blind in the next life also, i.e. they would not be able to see God with their spiritual eyes. The verse does not refer to any physical blindness because the human soul will shed its physical tabernacle here and men will rise on the Judgement Day free from all physical maladies and ailments. See also 6:106.

2003. Important Words:

عن (on account of). As a preposition it denotes transition, a compensation, superiority and a cause. It is synonymous with ب and من and بعد denotes the meaning of في etc. (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that disbelievers were determined to put the Holy Prophet to great hardship on account of the teachings which had been revealed to him so that they might compel him to alter them and devise others than those embodied in the Quran. But they failed in their purpose. This chapter was revealed when the Holy Prophet was about to leave for Medina. Disbelievers, having failed in all their evil designs to nip Islam in the bud, had made up their minds to make a last attempt to imprison the Holy Prophet, to expel him ignominiously from Mecca or in the last resort to kill him; but they failed in all their evil designs and plans. It is to these evil designs of disbelievers and their complete failure in carrying them out that reference has been made in this verse; and to take the verse to mean that the Prophet showed weakness in respect of his great Mission is obviously impossible. The verse thus refers to the designs and intentions of disbelievers with regard to the Holy Prophet and not to any actual or potential act of weakness on his part. The state of mind of disbelievers depicted in the words, *then they would have certainly taken thee for a special friend*, took concrete form when they once went in a deputation to the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, and

75. [a]And if We had not strengthened thee *with the Quran*, thou mightest have inclined to them a little.[2004]

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ ثَبَّتْنٰكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَّ تَرْكَنُ اِلَيْهِمْ شَيْـًٔا قَلِيْلًا ۗ۝٧٥

76. In that case We would have made thee taste similar *afflictions* of life and similar *afflictions* of death, *and* then thou wouldst not have found for thyself any helper against Us.[2005]

اِذًا لَّاَذَقْنٰكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيْرًا ۝٧٦

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[a] 25:33.

proposed to him that if his nephew would only refrain from criticizing their idols, they would make him their leader and chief. See also 8:31.

2004. Commentary:

Verses 14:29 and 25:33 help to explain the meaning of the present verse. In these verses respectively we have, Allah strengthens the believers with the word that is firmly established both in the present life and in the Hereafter; and, it is thus revealed that We may strengthen thy heart therewith. These verses show that in the verse under comment the words, if We had not strengthened thee, refer to the revelation of the Quran. The verse means to say that the Prophet’s nature was so pure that even if the Quran had not been revealed to him and he had no knowledge of God’s great intentions about him, he would never have stooped to practising shirk. In the event, however, of the Quran not having been revealed to him and his not having been blessed with heavenly light he might have perhaps compromised with disbelievers on some very minor details of doctrine or practice. But after the Quran had been revealed to him, there remained absolutely no possibility of any compromise with them on his part. The verse thus sheds a flood of light on the purity of the Prophet’s heart and the greatness of his spiritual stature and does not refer to any possible weakening in his Mission on his part on account of persecution or temptations held out to him by his enemies.

2005. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that if in the absence of the revelation of the Quran, the Prophet should have inclined to disbelievers, his inclination towards them would have done them no good and would not have saved them from Divine punishment. The verse drives home the supreme truth that all the Prophet’s greatness was due to his being the recipient of Divine

77. And indeed they are near to unsettling thee from the land that [a]they might expel thee therefrom; but in that case they *themselves* would not have stayed after thee save a little.**2006**

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّونَكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذًا لَّا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلٰفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

78. [b]*This has been Our* way with Our Messengers whom We sent before thee; and thou wilt not find any change in Our way.**2007**

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيْلًا ﴿٧٨﴾ ع ٨ ٧ ٨

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[a]8:31; 60:2. [b]33:63; 35:44; 48:24.

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revelation; without such revelation he was no more than an ordinary mortal.

2006. Important Words:

خلافک (after thee). خلاف is derived from خلف which means, he succeeded or remained after another. خالف عنا means, he remained behind us or after us. قعدت خلافه means, I remained behind him or after him. خلاف means, after or behind; the contrary or opposite, the sleeve of a shirt, etc. The Quranic expression اذا لا یلبثون خلافک الا قلیلا means, in that case they should not have remained after thee but a little while (Lane). See also 7:70, 170; 9:87.

Commentary:

As the Arabic expression استفزه من الارض means, he expelled him from the land (17:65), the words لیخرجوک (that they might expel thee) occurring immediately after لیستفزونک evidently do not imply simple expulsion because in that case there would have been useless repetition of the same meaning. They signify legal banishment which entails loss of rights of citizenship. Disbelievers wanted to brand the Prophet with the stigma of legal banishment so that he might lose all dignity with his people, but God Himself commanded him to leave Mecca and thus saved him from this stigma which involved loss of citizenship of that town.

2007. Commentary:

The verse means to say that it is invariably God's way with His Messengers that whenever anyone of them is expelled from his native land by his people with indignity and dishonour, that people is visited with Divine punishment. A striking illustration of this divine law is to be found in the case of the tribe of Thamūd and the Jews. The former sought to put obstacles in the way of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ's missionary expedition by killing his she-camel and the latter put Jesus on the cross. The Thamūd met with the destruction

R. 9.

79. [a]Observe Prayer at the declining and paling of the sun on to the darkness of the night, and the recitation *of the Quran in Prayer* at dawn. Verily, the recitation *of the Quran* at dawn is *specially* acceptable *with God*.**2008**

اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ ؕ اِنَّ قُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا ۝٧٩

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[a]11:115; 20:131; 30:18, 19; 50:40.

of their bodies and souls while the Jews suffered only moral and political death. But the Meccans were spared this punishment because the Holy Prophet left Mecca in pursuance of God’s own command and was not expelled from it by his people.

2008. Important Words:

ل (at) means, at, on or upon; nigh, near or about; (Lane & Aqrab). For other meanings of لام see 17:62.

دلوک (declining and paling) is derived from دلك. They say دلكه الدهر i.e. the time proved him and made him expert. دلكت الشمس means, (1) the sun declined from the meridian; (2) or it became yellow; (3) or it set (Lane & Aqrab).

غسق (darkness) is the noun-infinitive from غسق (*ghasaqa*). They say غسق الليل i.e. the night became dark. غسقت عينه means, his eyes became dark or shed tears. غسق (*ghasaqun*) means, the beginning of the darkness of night or the darkness of the night or the darkness of the beginning of the night or when شفق or redness in the horizon after sunset disappears (Lane).

Commentary:

The words of this verse denote the hours of the five daily Prayers of Islam. The three meanings of the word دلوک as given under Important Words indicate the times of ظهر (afternoon Prayer) and عصر (late afternoon Prayer) and مغرب (sun-set Prayer). The words غسق الليل include the times of مغرب (sun-set Prayer) but particularly refer to عشاء (night Prayer). The words قرآن الفجر (the recitation of the Quran at dawn) indicate the hour of فجر (morning Prayer).

In this and the following verses Muslims are warned to be prepared to meet great hardships and privations at the hands of the Jews of Medina. These people were very punctilious about outward acts of worship. The slightest slackness in Prayers on the part of Muslims would make them criticize Islam and the Holy Prophet. Moreover, Islam was destined to make great headway in Medina in the near future and as success and prosperity generally make men prone to a life of ease and they become indifferent towards Prayers, so Muslims are particularly warned to be

80. [a]And wake up for it (the Quran) in *the latter part of* the night as a supererogatory service for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station.[2009]

وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ۖ عَسٰٓى
اَنْ يَّبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُوْدًا ۝٨٠

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[a]50:41; 52:50; 73:3-5; 76:27.

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on their guard against any slackness in Prayers.

2009. Important Words:

فتهجد به (wake up for it in the latter part of the night). تهجد is derived from هجد (*hajada*). هجد (*hajada*) and هجّد (*hajjada*) and تهجّد (*tahajjada*) mean the same thing i.e. (1) he slept or slept in the night or in the latter part of the night; (2) he remained awake or was sleepless or wakeful in the night; (3) he awoke from sleep to pray or for some other purpose; (4) he prayed in the night. Hence praying in the latter part of the night is called تهجد (*tahajjud*). Some say that هجود which is the noun infinitive from هجد means, to sleep in the day and هجوع means, to sleep in the night or simply to sleep (Lane & Aqrab).

نافلة (as a supererogatory service) is derived from نفل. They say نفل الرجل i.e. he presented to the man a thing for which he desired no return or reward. نفل الامير الجند means, the commander gave to the soldiers the booty. نفل (*nafal*) is to do more than one is bound to do by duty or of which the doing is not obligatory. نافلة means, what accedes to or exceeds the original; a voluntary gift by way of alms or as a good work; a gift; a deed beyond what is incumbent or obligatory; grandson or grandchild; supererogatory Prayer (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words نافلة لك (as supererogatory service for thee) refer to the *Tahajjud* Prayer offered in the latter part of the night. The word نافلة, as its meanings show, implies that the *Tahajjud* Prayer is not obligatory for Muslims. The verse may also be taken to indicate that this Prayer was obligatory only for the Holy Prophet, and not for any other Prophet. The word نافلة further means a special favour and signifies that Prayers are not a burden to weary the flesh but a privilege and a favour from God.

The expression, *It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station*, embodies a great prophecy. Perhaps no other person has been so much maligned and abused as the Holy Prophet of Islam and certainly no other person has been the recipient of so much Divine praise and the object of the invocation of so many Divine blessings and favours upon him as he. The implied prophecy was that whereas the sons of darkness would abuse and condemn the Prophet, the good, the noble and the righteous would invoke God's

81. And say, 'O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and *then* make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power.'[2010]

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ
وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّاجْعَلْ
لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا ﴿٨١﴾

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blessings upon him and God Himself would proclaim his praises from His Exalted Throne. Thus the Prophet's praise by God and His Elect would far outweigh the undeserved abuse heaped upon him by the sons of darkness.

The expression مقاما محمود (exalted station) may also be understood to imply the special prerogative of شفاعة (intercession) which God bestowed upon the Holy Prophet. There is a well-known ḥadīth that the followers of all other Prophets, having despaired of the intercession of their own Prophets on the Day of Judgement, will seek the Holy Prophet's intercession and he will intercede for them, and thus they will acknowledge his greatness. The advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi is another manifestation of this مقام محمود (exalted station) of the Holy Prophet. When denunciation of him reached its climax, and he was also deserted by his own so-called followers and friends, God raised the Promised Messiah and Mahdi from among his followers and through him vindicated his honour. The Promised Messiah refuted and rebutted the charges of his enemies, and by imparting to his followers true knowledge of the manifold excellences and beauties of his teaching and character, inspired them with a new love and veneration for him. The mention of the grant of the مقام محمود after the command for obligatory and supererogatory Prayers implies the hint that the real remedy for him who receives mockery and abuse from the people of the world is not to retaliate with mockery and abuse but to turn to God and seek His help. This is sure to turn enemies into friends, as happened in the Prophet's case. His bitterest enemies became his most devoted followers. Of the many exalted stations the Holy Prophet was destined to obtain, the first was his possession of Medina from where spread his praise and holiness to the ends of the earth. This is why the next verse refers to his Migration to Medina.

2010. Important Words:

مدخل (entry) is derived from دخل, which means, he entered. ادخله of which the infinitive noun is ادخال or مدخل means, he caused him to enter. مدخل therefore means, to enter, entering or entry. The Quranic expression رب ادخلنى مدخل صدق means, O my Lord cause me to enter in a good or agreeable manner (or make my entry a good entry) (Lane).

Commentary:

In acceptance of his prayers and

82. And say, [a]“Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away *fast*.’**2011**

وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ؕ اِنَّ
الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوْقًا ﴿٨٢﴾

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[a] 21:19; 34:50.

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supplications, the Prophet in this verse has been vouchsafed the glad tidings that in fulfilment of the prophecy made in the words, *Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque*, he would be taken to Medina which would constitute the first of the various "exalted positions" (مقام محمود) which are to be bestowed upon him. In anticipation of the fulfilment of this prophecy, the Prophet is commanded to pray that his entry in Medina may be doubly blessed and so may be his departure from the town in which he is now living (Mecca). This prayer of the Prophet was amply fulfilled. His enemies desired to expel him from Mecca in ignominy and disgrace but he was foretold by God of their evil designs and in accordance with the divine plan he left Mecca of his own accord and arrived in perfect safety in Medina, where he succeeded in gathering round him a band of most faithful and devoted followers.

The question may be asked why the entry of the Prophet into Medina has been mentioned before his "coming forth" from Mecca, which is contrary to events as they took place. The answer to this seeming historical anomaly is that the order in the statement of events as they took place has been reversed in order to console the Holy Prophet. The news of his departure from Mecca would naturally have caused him great pain. In order to relieve him of this mental anguish God preceded the news of his departure from Mecca by the news of his entry into Medina where power and honour awaited him.

The word مدخل (entry) might also be taken to refer to the Holy Prophet’s subsequent victorious entry into Mecca. Read in this sense, the said "entry" may be understood to constitute another stage in the Holy Prophet’s march to his promised مقام محمود (exalted station) because with his triumphant re-entry into Mecca ended all opposition to Islam and the Prophet’s erstwhile opponents became his devoted followers.

The prayer contained in the words, *And grant me from Thyself a helping power*, was necessary because power is a great corrupter of men. The Prophet is taught to pray that instead of corrupting him the acquisition of power may prove a source of real help to him.

The prayer contained in this verse supports the interpretation of اسراء i.e. the Vision about the Prophet’s Night Journey mentioned in v. 2, namely that the flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina was sure to take place.

2011. Important Words:

زهق (has vanished away). They say زهق الباطل i.e. falsehood gradually

83. And [a]We are *gradually* revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers; but it only adds to the loss of the wrongdoers.2012

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ وَلَا يَزِيْدُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿۸۳﴾

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[a] 10:58; 12:112; 16:90.

weakened. زهق الشيء means, the thing perished, passed away or came to naught; became null, void or of no effect. زهقت نفسه means, his soul departed; he died (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse implies a beautiful hint that with the entry of the Holy Prophet into Medina his power would continue to grow and that of his enemy decline till it would be finally broken. So it came to pass when by the conquest of Mecca idolatry disappeared from Arabia forever.

The word زهق which has been translated as "has vanished away" actually conveys, as shown under Important Words, the sense of gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance. It is among the marvels of Quranic diction that to convey a certain sense it selects that particular word which points to a long sequence of events. In this particular instance the sense of the vanishing of falsehood might as well have been expressed by the word هلك (perished) or بطل (became useless, vain or ineffective) but neither of these words would have conveyed the sense of gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance which is expressed by the word زهق. This word, in fact, implies a prophecy of the gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance of idolatry from Mecca, which was literally fulfilled as foretold.

It is another marvel of the style of the Quran that, without being poetry, its verses possess that poetic rhythm and cadence without which it is not possible to give full expression to feelings of extreme delight. The verse under comment furnishes one such example. After the conquest of Mecca when the Holy Prophet was busy clearing the Ka‘bah of the idols which had desecrated it, he repeated as he struck each of the idols the following verse of the Quran:

وقل جاء الحق و زهق الباطل ان الباطل كان زهوقا i.e. And say, Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast. One can imagine the deep emotion the Prophet’s Companions must have felt when they watched him strike down the idols one after the other and repeat this Quranic verse in a measured tone. It is only natural that they spontaneously joined him in reciting this verse on that august occasion.

2012. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that as to a jaundiced eye all objects appear

84. [a]And when We bestow favour on man, he turns away and goes aside; and when evil touches him, he gives himself up to despair.**2013**

وَاِذَآ اَنۡعَمۡنَا عَلَى الۡاِنۡسَانِ اَعۡرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَـُٔوۡسًا ﴿۸۴﴾

85. Say, ‘Everyone acts according to his own way, [b]and your Lord knows well who is best guided.’**2014**

قُلۡ كُلٌّ يَّعۡمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهٖ ؕ فَرَبُّكُمۡ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ هُوَ اَهۡدٰى سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۸۵﴾ ٩ ع ٧ ٩

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[a]See 17:68. [b]28:86.

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yellow, similarly to a mind which is swayed by jealousy and prejudice, even most pure and noble teachings appear impure and ignoble. Such was the case with disbelievers in regard to the teachings of the Quran.

The word "Quran" in this verse may also be taken to refer to the portion of the Quran already revealed, the portion containing prophecies about the prosperity and success of the Faithful and the ruin and destruction of disbelievers. The verse means to say that the time has come for the fulfilment of those prophecies and that the flight of the Prophet from Mecca would usher in an era of triumph for Islam and would bring discomfiture and humiliation to disbelievers.

2013. Commentary:

The verse means to say that Muslims were subjected to tortures and suffered all sorts of hardships for thirteen long years, but they bore them with fortitude and patience. The case of disbelievers, however, is different. When their turn came to be visited with Divine punishment they would give way to despair, because they had no faith in God.

2014. Important Words:

شاكلته (his own way). شاكلة is the feminine of شاكل which is synonymous with شكل (*shaklun*) which is the infinitive noun from شكل (*shakala*). It means, a likeness or resemblance; shape, form or form of a thing. They say هذا على شاكلة ابيه i.e. this is according to the likeness of his father. شاكلة also and more commonly means, a particular way, cause, mode or manner of acting or conduct; direction, side; motive, intention or purpose; creed; etc. The Quranic expression كل يعمل على شاكلته means, everyone acts according to his particular way (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Every man acts according to his own motives, way of thinking, aims and purposes. The aim and object of disbelievers is to attain worldly gains. Therefore when they suffer a worldly loss they give themselves up to despair. But a believer’s whole aim in life is to win God’s pleasure, so the loss of worldly wealth leaves him unperturbed. He faces all trials and

R. 10.

86. And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge *thereof* you have been given but a little.'[2015]

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ۭ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ
مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ
اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ٨٦

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hardships with a brave heart. The verse means to say that God treats men according to their motives and intentions. He takes into consideration not only the actions of man but also his intentions and motives. As all the efforts of disbelievers are for this world, they do not deserve to be the recipients of God's help and favour. This and the preceding verse apply as much to the Jews as to the idolaters of Mecca.

2015. Commentary:

Various meanings have been assigned to the word روح (soul) by scholars of different schools of Muslim religious thought. According to some of the commentators it applies to all angels; according to others it means only the angel to whom is entrusted the task of the creation of the world; yet others think that it particularly applies to the Archangel Gabriel.

Some scholars, however, are of the view that الروح means the word of God, while some others take it as applying to the Quran. But the most appropriate meaning of this word is "the human soul."

The question regarding the nature of the human soul was first put to the Holy Prophet at Mecca by some of the Meccan idolaters, probably at the instance of the Jews of Medina, when the news reached the latter that he had claimed to be a Divine Prophet. In reply the Prophet recited to them the present verse. When, however, he came to Medina the question appears again to have been put to him by the Jews and he must naturally have recited to them the same verse, thus giving rise to the wrong notion held by some traditionalists that this verse was revealed in Medina or that, after having been first revealed at Mecca, it was again revealed at Medina. The fact is that it was only revealed once and that was at Mecca.

As stated above, the most appropriate meaning of the word الروح is the human soul. The soul has been described here as something created by the direct command of God. As a matter of fact according to the Quran all creation falls under two categories: (1) Original creation which is brought about without the aid or help of any substance or matter previously created. (2) Subsequent creation which is brought about with the aid and help of means and matter previously created. The former kind of creation falls under the category of امر (lit. command) for which see 2:118, and the latter is known as خلق (lit. creating).

87. And if We pleased, We could certainly take away that which We have revealed to thee *and* then thou wouldst find in the matter no guardian for thee against Us;[2016]

وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ
اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهٖ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيْلًا ﴿٨٧﴾

In this verse we are told that the human soul belongs to the first category.

In the period of their spiritual decadence the Jews seem to have come to dabble in spiritualism and occult practices like many modern Spiritualists, Theosophists and Hindu Yogis. They had come to believe in magic and so-called spiritual practices. These occult practices appeared to have exercised great influence on them. It appears that the Jews started taking interest in magic and occult practices in the time of the Prophet David. These practices became very popular with them in the time of Jesus. According to Philo and the well-known Jewish writer, Josephus, the Essenes in the time of Jesus greatly indulged in these practices and by a life of renunciation they had greatly developed this art. The Quran also refers to the Jewish counterparts of the modern spiritualists in 72:8-10. References to black and white magic may also be found in the books of the Old and New Testaments. Some of the Jews of Medina also seem to have resorted to these practices in the time of the Holy Prophet. This is why when the Meccan idolaters sought their help in confuting the Prophet they suggested that they (the Meccan idolaters) should enquire of him regarding the powers and attributes of the human soul. The Quran answers this inquiry in the verse under comment by saying that the perfect soul derives its powers from the command of God and anything else that is claimed to be acquired by so-called spiritual exercises and magical arts is all meaningless. It may be added that by الروح is particularly meant the perfect soul. That the knowledge acquired by so-called spiritual exercises and by their professed communication with the dead carries little weight has often been demonstrated by the fact that the information claimed to be furnished by departed souls to different mediums regarding the next world always varies.

The question of the powers and attributes of the human soul is of more than local importance, inasmuch as it had not only agitated the minds of the Medinite Jews of the Prophet’s time but has also agitated those of Hindu Yogis, Theosophists and Spiritualists in our own time. Taking الروح in its general sense the verse would mean that the human soul is as much the creation of God as the human body.

2016. Commentary:

The present verse furnishes further

88. [a]Except mercy from thy Lord. Surely, His grace towards thee is great.[2017]

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ ط إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

89. [b]Say, 'If mankind and the jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even though they should help one another.'[2018]

قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَن يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٩﴾

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[a]28:87. [b]2:24; 10:39; 11:14; 52:35.

evidence in support of what has been said in the previous verse. The words of the present verse appear to be addressed to the Holy Prophet but as a matter of fact they are not. As the question referred to in the previous verse was not asked by him, so the answer is evidently meant for those who had asked it. The verse means to say that the human soul is so weak that, far from revealing new spiritual truths, it is incapable even of reproducing those already revealed if they happen to disappear from the world.

The verse also implies a prophecy that a time would come when Quranic knowledge would depart from the earth. A similar prophecy of the Holy Prophet has been reported by Ibn Merdawaih and by Baihaqī and Ibn Mājah that there would come a time when the kernel and spirit of the Quran would disappear from the earth and not all the so-called mystics and sufis of the time claiming, like their Jewish prototypes, to possess supernatural powers would be able to restore it with their concerted effort.

2017. Commentary:

The meaning of the expression, *Surely, His grace towards thee is great*, among other things, is that when the spirit of the Quran disappeared from the world and its letter only remained, God alone could and would bring it back.

2018. Commentary:

This verse confirms the interpretation of the two preceding verses, for it develops the argument embodied in them. It holds out the challenge to those who indulge in occult practices and by means of these practices claim to receive spiritual knowledge from the departed spirits that, if they seriously think their claim to possess any substance, then let all of them assemble together and summon to their aid the hidden spirits which they think can communicate to them the knowledge of spiritual matters, and with their concerted and combined effort produce a book like the Quran.

90. And surely, [a]We have set forth for mankind in various ways all kinds of similitudes in this Quran, but most men would reject everything but disbelief.[2019]

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۫ فَاَبٰۤى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿۹۰﴾

91. And they say, 'We will never believe thee until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth;[2020]

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ يَنْۢبُوْعًا ﴿۹۱﴾

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[a] 17:42; 18:55.

If they failed to produce such a book, and most certainly they would fail if they ever made such an attempt, then the falsity of their claim to receive spiritual knowledge from departed spirits would become established beyond doubt as also would their assertion that the Holy Prophet had acquired the knowledge contained in the Quran by means of certain spiritual exercises.

2019. Important Words:

صرفنا (We have set forth in various ways).

See 17:42.

Commentary:

The verse brings home to disbelievers their complete inability to produce a book like the Quran. It purports to say that their mental faculties are limited. They can deal with only such matters of which they have made a special study. The Quran, on the other hand, has comprehensively dealt with all sorts of subjects—Politics, Physical Science, Ethics, Economics, etc., and has provided right guidance in matters of belief and conduct about which the various existing religions disagree. These people have not the capacity even to understand and appreciate these matters, much less to produce a book like the Quran—humanity's infallible guide. In spite of their patent inability to accept the above challenge they persist in their denial of the Divine origin of the Quran out of sheer obstinacy. One day they will reap the fruit of their wayward denial.

2020. Commentary:

When the Meccans were confounded by the answers of the Quran to their questions and objections, they turned round and demanded of the Prophet that if the Quran comprehended every kind of knowledge then he should be able to work miracles—cause springs to gush forth from the earth, grow gardens and build houses of gold for himself. The demand was either intended as mockery or had its basis in the belief that they shared with the Jews that

92. [a]'Or thou have a garden of date-palms and vines, and cause streams to gush forth in the midst thereof in abundance;

اَوْ تَكُوْنَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْاَنْهٰرَ خِلٰلَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ﴿٩٢﴾

93. 'Or, thou cause the heaven to fall upon us in pieces, as thou hast claimed, or, thou bring Allah and the angels before us face to face;[2021]

اَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَآءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ قَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

94. 'Or thou have a house of gold or thou ascend up into heaven; and we will not believe in thy ascension until thou send down to us a book that we can read.' Say, 'Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a Messenger.'[2022]

اَوْ يَكُوْنَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ اَوْ تَرْقٰى فِى السَّمَآءِ ؕ وَلَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتّٰى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتٰبًا نَّقْرَؤُهٗ ؕ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّىْ هَلْ كُنْتُ اِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿٩٤﴾ ع

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[a] 25:11.

most wonderful works could be performed by special spiritual exercises and by the help of disembodied spirits.

2021. Commentary:

Disbelievers mockingly told the Holy Prophet, that, if he could not bring to them any of the good things which they demanded he might as well cause the sky to fall upon them or let God and His angels destroy them.

2022. Commentary:

The contemptuous tone of the disbelievers' discourse is continued in this verse. They are represented as saying to the Prophet that if he could not accomplish any of the things they demanded of him, he might at least have some good things for himself. Pharaoh had challenged Moses that he could not be a true Prophet because he possessed no bracelets of gold (43:54); but the Meccan disbelievers went a step further and declared that the Prophet's claims could only be regarded true if he possessed a house made of gold.

The words, *Or thou ascend up into heaven…that we can read*, contain a derisive reference to the *Mi'rāj* or the Ascension of the Prophet. The disbelievers meant to say that they would not believe in his ascension unless he stayed in the heavens and let fall to them a book that they might read. To these foolish demands of the

R. 11.

95. [a]And nothing has prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them save that they said, ‘Has Allah sent a man as a Messenger?’**2023**

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡۤا اِذۡ جَآءَهُمُ
الۡهُدٰۤى اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ قَالُوۡۤا اَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ
بَشَرًا رَّسُوۡلًا ﴿۹۵﴾

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[a] 17:60; 23:25; 34:44.

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disbelievers the words, *Say, Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a Messenger*, embody a crushing reply. They are told that their demands fall under two heads: (a) those that pertain to God; (b) those that pertain to the Prophet. The demands of the first category are frivolous in character and God is above such frivolities. These demands have nothing to do with the spiritual development of man for which Divine Messengers are raised. As for their demands pertaining to the Prophet, they are incompatible with his humanity and his mission as a Prophet of God. A human being, even one invested with prophethood, could not and would not indulge in such acrobatic feats.

2023. Commentary:

In the previous verse the Holy Prophet, in reply to the foolish and frivolous demands of disbelievers, was commanded to say to them that he was nothing beyond a Messenger of God. The present verse contains their strongest objection that he is only a mortal. In fact, the words, *Has Allah sent a man as a Messenger*, contain not one but several objections. The first is that, God being so great, it is incompatible with His dignity to appoint a mere mortal as His Messenger. This objection in reality implies rejection and denial of revelation itself. Some people reject a Prophet out of vanity and a false sense of self-importance. They do not deny the possibility of Divine revelation, but in their pride and egotism they cannot bring themselves to think that God could possibly choose a man of no consequence, as they think, to be the bearer of His Message. Another class of people hold that man, being endowed with great natural gifts and talents, is quite fit to find the right path by the help of these natural faculties alone and needs no Divine revelation to guide him. Yet a third class would object to any mortal being a Divine Prophet on the ground that a Prophet requires higher and better faculties for the effective discharge of his onerous duties than those possessed by a mere mortal. These people are ever ready to believe in the claims of any mountebank if only he professes to possess superhuman powers, but find it hard to believe in similar claims of another person possessed of the highest moral and spiritual stature who might be sincere enough to disclaim all such superhuman powers. This class of men fall an easy prey to supernaturalism. Persons who suffer

96. Say, ‘Had there been in the earth angels walking about in peace and quiet, [a]We should have certainly sent down to them from heaven an angel *as* a Messenger.’[2024]

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿۹۶﴾

97. Say, [b]‘Sufficient is Allah for a Witness between me and you; surely, He knows and sees His servants full well.’[2025]

قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا بَيْنِيْ وَ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ۢ بَصِيْرًا ﴿۹۷﴾

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[a]23:25; 25:22; 43:61. [b]10:30; 13:44; 29:53; 46:9.

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from such mental distempers might well profess to believe in the past Prophets, but their failure to recognize the truth of a new claimant to Prophethood amply proves that the faith which they profess in the old Prophets is but an empty and customary faith inherited from their forefathers and is devoid of all reality.

2024. Commentary:

It is clear from this verse that what is here meant by "angels" are not real angels but angel-like men, because real angels certainly would not need other angels to come as Warners to them.

The verse constitutes an effective answer to those people who in their arrogance say that, being superior to their Prophet, they should have received revelation direct from God. They are told that angels descend upon angel-like men, and not upon their opposites and that if they bring about an angelic change in their lives, angels would begin to descend upon them.

But as they have allied themselves with Satan they could not expect visits from angels. The verse also provides an answer to another class of men who believe that man is too puny and inconsequential a being to be the recipient of Divine revelation and that higher beings are required for this purpose. The answer given is that only beings of the same species can help their prototypes achieve their salvation, because only they can serve as exemplars or models for them. Thus none but a man could be the bearer of a Divine Message for mankind, because only a man could serve as a model for other men. The word رسول (Messenger) here does not mean simply the bearer of Divine revelation, but the possessor of all the attributes and qualifications of a Divine Messenger.

2025. Commentary:

This verse provides a telling answer to the other two objections mentioned in v.95 viz. (a) that man is too unimportant a being to be the recipient of God’s revelation; and (b) that he is endowed with such

98. [a]And he whom Allah guides, is the *only* one rightly guided; but *as for* those whom He causes to perish, thou wilt find for them no helpers beside Him. And [b]on the Day of Resurrection We shall gather them together on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode will be Hell; every time it abates, We shall increase for them the flame.**2026**

وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ
فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ
وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ
عُمْيًا وَّبُكْمًا وَّصُمًّا ؕ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ
كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنٰهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿۹۸﴾

النصف

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[a]7:179; 18:18; 39:37-38. [b]6:129; 19:69.

extraordinary natural gifts and faculties as not to need Divine revelation at all for his guidance. The answer here given is that God being the Creator of mankind knows full well how limited or self-sufficient are their natural gifts and so when He sends a Messenger, it is not for them to judge whether a Prophet should or should not have been sent to them but whether or not the claimant is a true Messenger. If, tested by God’s own tangible evidence, his claim is proved true, then both these objections fall to the ground and it has to be accepted that man is neither too unimportant to be the recipient of God’s word nor too self-sufficient not to need revelation.

2026. Commentary:

In this verse believers are assured that they should not feel discouraged at the obstinacy and waywardness of disbelievers because those who are the inveterate enemies of the truth today may become its devoted votaries tomorrow. The decision as to who deserves to be guided in the end and who will forever remain wedded to disbelief rests entirely in God’s own hands. One thing, however, is certain: truth shall ultimately prevail. So there is no cause for believers to be disheartened at the opposition shown by disbelievers.

The words "on their faces" have also been used in 54:49 where we have, *On the day when they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces*. So the words in the verse under comment may also mean that disbelievers "shall be dragged on their faces" into the fire i.e. they shall be humbled, disgraced and severely punished. Some sayings of the Holy Prophet also throw light on the meaning of the words, "on their faces." He is reported to have said, ان الذی امشهم علی ارجلهم قادر علی ان یمشیهم علی وجوههم i.e. He Who has made men walk on their feet can also make them move

99. [a]That is their recompense, because they rejected Our Signs and said, 'What! [b]when we are reduced to bones and broken particles, shall we really be raised up as a new creation?'**2027**

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمۡ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالُوۡۤا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ خَلۡقًا جَدِيۡدًا ﴿۹۹﴾

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[a]18:107; 34:18. [b]17:50; 23:83; 36:79; 37:17; 56:48.

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along on their faces (Bukhārī, *Kitābur-Riqāq*). Another ḥadīth says that on the Day of Resurrection men will be raised in three different forms. Some will be raised as riding, others on foot, and yet others on their faces. Another ḥadīth speaks of the people of the last category as being dragged on their faces (Ma'ānī, vol. 15). It appears that people of the first category will be the Prophets, those of the second the Faithful, while those belonging to the third category will be the disbelievers. In fact, an action done in this world will assume a corresponding form in the next. As the aim and object of disbelievers in this world is the attainment of paltry material gains and they, as it were, instead of looking up to God, look down to earth, so in this verse they are represented as moving along with their faces turned downward in the next life.

The Arabic expression مرالقوم على وجوههم means, the people went on hurrying. Taken in this sense the words على وجوههم mean, when disbelievers are raised on the Day of Resurrection, they will be hurrying along which would indicate the perturbed state of their minds (14:44). The word وجه also means, an object, intention or motive. In this sense of the word, the expression "on their faces," would mean that God would raise them according to their intentions and motives and the objects they pursued in this life. As in the present life, they turned their backs to God, so in the life to come they would be kept far removed from Him. And as they did not employ their natural powers to find out the truth in this life, so they would be deprived of these powers in the next and would be raised deaf, dumb and blind.

The words "it abates" do not mean that the fire of Hell will become extinguished or its intensity would lessen. They only mean that when on account of burning in the Fire for a sufficiently long time, the disbelievers' sense of feeling became dull, God would again sharpen it and they would once more begin to feel the burning of Hellfire as keenly as before. See also 4:57.

2027. Commentary:

All disbelief is born of lack of belief in the life after death. Disbelievers rejected the word of God and thus rendered themselves deserving of punishment but this rejection of Divine revelation was due to a lack of belief in the life after

100. Have they not seen that [a]Allah Who created the heavens and the earth has the power to create the like of them? And He has appointed for them a term; there is no doubt about it. But the wrongdoers would reject everything but disbelief.[2028]	اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ اَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ فَاَبَى الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ۝١٠٠
101. Say, ‘Even if you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, you would surely hold them back for fear of spending, for man is niggardly.’[2029]	قُلْ لَّوْ اَنْتُمْ تَمْلِكُوْنَ خَزَاۗىِٕنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّاَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْاِنْفَاقِ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ قَتُوْرًا ۝١٠١ ع ۱۱ ۷ ۱۱

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[a] 36:82; 46:34; 86:9.

death when they would have to render an account of their deeds. All rejection of religion and truth is, in fact, the result of denial of the next life. This is why the Quran has laid so much stress on the life after death and reverts to this all-important subject time and again.

2028. Commentary:

The verse embodies an invincible argument to prove the existence of life after death. It does not straightaway say to disbelievers that they would be born again because God has the power to give them a new birth. Such a statement would have been an empty assertion. It says to them that if it is difficult for them to believe in a life after death, they would as well disbelieve if they were told that they would lose their power and prestige to those very weak and poor Muslims whom they now look down upon as of no worth and consequence. If this seemingly impossible prophecy about their complete destruction and the rise to power of the poor Muslims turned out to be true, the claim that there is a life after death and that they will be punished for their misdeeds and rejection of truth will also have to be accepted as true. Now history bears eloquent testimony to the fact that within a few years after the above prophecy was made, the powerful Empires of Persia and Rome fell into dust before the irresistible onrush of Islam and the half-starved camel-drivers of Arabia became the leaders and teachers of mankind.

2029. Commentary:

This verse reverts to the subject of the human soul dealt with in v. 86 and purports to say that the treasures of

R. 12.

102. And of a truth [a]We gave Moses nine manifest Signs. So ask *then* the children of Israel. When he came to them, [b]Pharaoh said to him, ‘I do think thee, O Moses, to be a victim of deception.’[2030]

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ
فَسْـَٔلْ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ فَقَالَ
لَهٗ فِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰمُوْسٰى
مَسْحُوْرًا ﴿۱۰۲﴾

103. He said, ‘Thou knowest well *that* none has sent down these *Signs* but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as *so many* evidences; and I certainly

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِلَّا
رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ بَصَآئِرَ ۚ وَاِنِّيْ
لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰفِرْعَوْنُ مَثْبُوْرًا ﴿۱۰۳﴾

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[a]7:104; 27:13. [b]27:14; 28:37; 40:25.

Divine knowledge which lie hidden in the word of God know no end or limit while the knowledge that is acquired by so-called spiritualists by their occult practices is very limited. This is why the Elect of God diffuse Divine knowledge freely while so-called spiritualists are very parsimonious in acquainting even their closest disciples with the knowledge they claim to acquire by their unnatural practices. The truth is that the powers of God are limitless and so are the great treasures of Divine knowledge which He vouchsafes to His Elect. They diffuse and expend it freely without fear of its becoming exhausted so that God’s creatures may become acquainted with all the innumerable stages of His nearness and that they may realize Him and become at one with Him.

2030. Commentary:

The nine signs alluded to in this verse have been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. They are as follows: (a) the rod (7:108); (b) the white hand (7:109); (c), (d) drought and scarcity of fruits which means the death of the first born children (7:131); (e) the storm; (f) the locusts; (g) the lice; (h) the frogs; and (i) the punishment of the blood (7:134). The Bible gives a strange description of these signs. Some of them were miracles pure and simple, such as the miracle of the rod and the radiant hand, while others served both as signs and as punishment. In 7:134 these Signs have been described as آيات مفصلات; the word مفصلات indicating that they were shown at intervals. Reference to these signs in this verse implies that similar signs will be shown to the Jews by the Holy Prophet and that like Pharaoh they would not benefit by them and like him they too would incur God’s displeasure and be visited with heavenly punishment.

think thee, O Pharaoh, to be *a* ruined *man*.'2031

104. So he resolved to remove them from the land; [a]but We drowned him and those who were with him, all together.2032

فَاَرَادَ اَنْ يَّسْتَفِزَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۰۴﴾

105. And after him We said to the children of Israel, [b]'Dwell ye in the land; and when *the time of* the promise of the latter days comes, We shall bring you together *out of various peoples*.'2033

وَّقُلْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ لِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اسْكُنُوا الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيْفًا ﴿۱۰۵﴾

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[a]2:51; 7:137; 8:55; 20:79; 26:67; 28:41. [b]7:138.

2031. Commentary:

Pharaoh spoke of Moses as a victim of deception (v. 102), in order to lower him in the estimation of his people and to weaken his cause. But Moses warned Pharaoh that he would not succeed in his object because his people would certainly believe in him (Moses) and Pharaoh himself would come to a miserable end. The verse, in fact, implies a warning to the Meccans that, like Pharaoh who tried to defame and decry Moses, they would call the Holy Prophet a cheat and a victim of deception but like Pharaoh they would also fail in their designs and the Prophet would succeed.

2032. Commentary:

The verse contains a prophetic reference to some incidents in the Prophet's life that were to happen later in Medina. The Jews and some of the leaders of the Quraish had hatched a plot to bring the Prophet into collision with the power of Imperial Rome as a result of which he had to undertake a long and hazardous journey to Tabūk. But God frustrated the evil designs of the Jews and the Quraish and the Prophet returned to Medina safe and sound after having concluded treaties of friendship with some of the tribes of those regions.

2033. Important Words:

لفيفا (together) is derived from لف i.e. he folded up or wrapped up a thing in another thing. لف العدو means, he involved the enemy in difficulty. لف و نشر in rhetoric means, involution and evolution or complication and explication. لفيفا means, wrapped up under an envelope; mixed; mixed crowd; intimate friend (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words "the land" do not refer to Egypt, where the Israelites never dwelt after Pharaoh had been drowned. They refer to Canaan, the land which was promised to them.

It is worthy of note that whereas Moses could never settle the Israelites in Egypt where he was born and brought up and got only Canaan as a substitute for it, the Holy Prophet not only regained Mecca, the land of his birth and the cradle of his Faith, but many other countries also fell into the hands of his followers.

The present verse read along with verses 17:6-8 & 1:6-7 may be explained as follows:

After the destruction of Pharaoh Jews would go and dwell in Canaan from where after sometime they would be driven away but would later return to it. In consequence, however, of their misdeeds they would again be visited with Divine punishment and be banished from their hearths and homes and would live in exile till the time when the second of the two punishments would overtake another people (Muslims) who would succeed them (the Jews) as their counterparts. It is then that they (the Jews) will be gathered from the ends of the earth and brought back to their Holy Land. But with the regeneration of Muslims through the Promised Messiah the latter would again come into their own.

The verse also implies that, like Jews, the Muslims would suffer-national disaster twice. As mentioned in vv. 6-8 Divine punishment befell the Jews twice. They suffered terribly first at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, when they were carried away into captivity, and then a second time at the hands of the Emperor Titus of Rome. On both these occasions the Jews were driven away from their native land and were scattered all over the world. In the present verse a promise has been held out to them that they will be gathered in the Holy Land at the time of the fulfilment of "the promise of the latter days" (وعد الاخرة). This fulfilment of "the promise of the latter days" must have reference to some other incident than the twofold national disaster that overtook the Jews. Elsewhere (73:16) the Quran has compared the Holy Prophet to Moses and 1:7 implies that a section of Muslims would follow in the footsteps of Jews. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that, like Jews, Muslims also were destined to be smitten twice with national disaster. The first of these two disasters befell Muslims at the time of the Crusades when for a time the Holy Land was lost to them and later when Baghdad fell to the arms of the Tartars under Hulagu Khan. They were to be visited with Divine punishment for the second time in the time of the Promised Messiah just as the Jews were punished in that of the first Messiah—Jesus. In the present verse we are told that when Muslims are punished for the second time which means the fulfilment of "the promise of the latter days" the Jews would be brought back to their Holy Land from all parts of the world. This is what is happening now in Palestine.

According to Fat'ḥul-Bayān some very prominent Muslim religious scholars hold the view that وعد الاخرة (the promise of the latter days) applies to the time of the Promised

106. [a]And in truth have We sent it down and with truth has it descended. And We have sent thee only as a bearer of good tidings and a Warner.[2034]

وَبِالْحَقِّ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ ؕ
وَمَاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا (١٠٦) وقف لازم

107. And [b]the Quran We have revealed in pieces that thou mayest read it to mankind at intervals and We have sent it down piecemeal.[2035]

وَقُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلٰى
مُكْثٍ وَّنَزَّلْنٰهُ تَنْزِيْلًا (١٠٧)

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[a]4:106; 5:49; 39:3. [b]25:33; 73:5.

Messiah. This interpretation supports our view.

2034. Commentary:

This verse signifies that the prophecies made in the previous verse would certainly be fulfilled. These prophecies related to the two disasters that befell the followers of Moses and by implication related also to the two great national disasters that were to overtake the followers of the Holy Prophet. The words, *We have sent thee only as a bearer of good tidings and a Warner*, imply a prophecy about the ultimate destruction of the enemies of Islam and the triumph of its followers.

The verse also embodies a refutation of the foolish notion that Satan can sometimes interfere with the revelation of the Quran. It unmistakably declares that Quranic revelation has ever remained absolutely immune from any such interference.

2035. Commentary:

This verse explains why the present order of the chapters and verses of the Quran is different from the order in which they were originally revealed. As a matter of fact the Quran had to meet the needs of two classes of people: (a) It had to answer the temporary objections, of its immediate addressees and satisfy the immediate needs of the first converts to Islam; and (b) it had to lay down guidance for the multitudinous and multifarious problems of mankind for all time. The verses dealing with the objections of Meccan idolaters and the spiritual upbringing of early Muslims naturally had to be revealed first and those which dealt with the lasting spiritual human needs were revealed afterwards. Thus the Quranic verses were revealed piecemeal and at intervals. Whenever a particular objection was raised by disbelievers, verses containing the answer to such an objection were revealed. Similarly, when early Muslims were required to be provided with guidance at a particular occasion, necessary and relevant verses were revealed to meet the needs of that occasion. That was the

108. Say, 'Whether you believe therein or believe not, those to whom knowledge has been given before it, [a]do fall down prostrate on their faces when it is recited to them,'**2036**

قُلْ اٰمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ اَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖٓ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ۙ﴿۱۰۸﴾

109. And say, 'Holy is our Lord. [b]Surely, the promise of our Lord is bound to be fulfilled.'**2037**

وَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۱۰۹﴾

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[a]19:59; 32:16; 38:25. [b]18:99; 19:62; 46:17; 73:19.

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order in which the Quran was originally revealed. But since the temporary needs of the immediate addressees of the Quran were different from the permanent requirements of mankind in general, the order in which the Quran was later compiled in the form of a book had naturally to be different from that in which it was originally revealed. It may be noted that the present order of the chapters of the Quran and of the verses was also made in accordance with Divine command. There are traditions which clearly relate that whenever a verse or a group of verses was revealed to the Holy Prophet, he would send for one of the recorders and direct him to record the revealed verse or verses indicating to him at the same time the chapter and the particular place in it to which they belonged. This shows that whenever the Holy Prophet received a certain revelation he was also divinely informed where the revealed verse or verses were to be placed. It is indeed an outstanding miracle of the Quran that it was revealed in an order which was best suited for the needs of the period during which it was revealed and was arranged for permanent use in the order which was also best suited for humanity's permanent needs. The subject of the Quranic verses having been revealed in one order and subsequently arranged in a different order has been dealt with at some length in General Introduction.

2036. Commentary:

The words, *those to whom knowledge has been given before it*, refer to Muslims who had believed in the Quran before this verse was revealed. They may also refer to the "People of the Book", who have been principally addressed in this chapter.

The words, *fall down prostrate on their faces*, symbolize the humblest form of devotion and prayer to God and incidentally represent a Muslim showing his uttermost humility and devotion in Prayer.

2037. Commentary:

The words سبحان ربنا (Holy is our Lord) show that it was inevitable that

110. They fall down on their faces weeping, and it increases humility in them.[2038]	وَيَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾ السجدة
111. [a]Say, ‘Call upon Allah or call upon Raḥmān, *by* whichever name you call Him, His are the most beautiful names.’ [b]And utter not thy prayer aloud, nor utter it *too* low, but seek a way between.[2039]	قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ؕ اَيًّامَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۚ وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۱۱﴾

[a]7:181; 20:9; 59:25. [b]7:56,206.

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the cause of Islam should prosper and its opponents should be completely discomfited and overthrown. For if it had not been so, it would have constituted a reflection on the glory and Holiness of God Who had promised success and victory to Muslims and defeat and discomfiture to disbelievers.

2038. Commentary:

The verse expresses a Muslim’s state of mind when in the posture of prostration the realization of the greatness of God and his own weakness renders him extremely humble.

2039. Commentary:

In the previous verse reference was made to prostrations and prayers. In the present verse a Muslim is taught how to pray while prostrating for the fulfilment of God’s promises and the betterment of his own self.

The expression, *His are the most beautiful names*, signifies that God has many names which express His various attributes and a Muslim should invoke in his prayer that particular attribute of God which has a special bearing on the matter for which he wants to pray. If, for instance, the object of prayer falls under the category of God’s attribute of رحمانیت the supplicant should invoke His attribute of الرحمان (the Gracious). Similarly, if the object for which he prays has particular reference to the attribute of الرحیم (the Merciful), or الرزاق (the Great Sustainer), or الوهاب (the Bestower), these attributes should be invoked and so on, i.e. prayer should be offered to God by invoking the relevant Divine attributes.

The word صلوٰة applies to both the five daily Prayers, and prayer in general. The context, however, shows that it is prayer in general that is meant here.

The expression, *but seek a way between*, implies an injunction that we should pray to God neither too-loudly, for He is not deaf, nor in too low a voice as that would interfere with our concentration of mind in prayer.

112. [a]And say, 'All praise belongs to Allah Who has taken unto Himself no son, and Who has no partner in *His* Kingdom, nor has He anyone to help *Him* on account of weakness.' And extol His glory with all glorification.2040

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا
وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ
لَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ﴿۱۱۲﴾ ع
ع ۱۲ ۱۱ ۱۲

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[a] 18:5; 19:36, 93; 25:3; 72:4.

2040. Commentary

This verse which is the last of the present *Sūrah*, contains an implied reference to the subject of اسراء (the Night Journey) mentioned in v. 2 of this chapter. It means to say that God would bring about the fulfilment of the promises implied in the Prophet's Vision. The cause of Islam would triumph and idolatry would disappear from Arabia. This glorious triumph of Islam and the inglorious discomfiture of disbelief and idolatry would completely demolish the false doctrines of the Trinity and plurality of Godhead. The ultimate and complete defeat of these false doctrines, prophesied by an unknown and poor man of Mecca without means and power, at a time when there were no ostensible prospects of such a prophecy being fulfilled, would show that God Who had made this prophecy through His Prophet was the One True God Who had no son or partner.

CHAPTER 18

AL-KAHF

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation

According to Ibn ʻAbbās and Ibn Zubair, the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca (Manthūr). Almost all the commentators of the Quran appear to be agreed upon this point. ʻAbdullah bin Masʻūd's report shows that it was revealed in the early days of the Meccan period. He says that Banī Isrā'īl, Kahf and Maryam are among those *Sūrahs* which were revealed very early in the Prophet's ministry (Bukhārī). According to some authorities, however, the present is one of those *Sūrahs* which were revealed not piecemeal but in one whole. Anas reports that this *Sūrah* was revealed in one whole and was guarded by 70,000 angels (Manthūr, vol. 4, p. 210). This ḥadīth should not be understood to mean that some chapters of the Quran enjoyed a greater protection than others at the time of their revelation. The traditions which say that so many angels descended for the protection of such and such chapters do not speak of their protection at the time when they were being revealed but after they had been revealed. In fact, every chapter deals with a particular subject. Sometimes a chapter contains prophecies on the fulfilment of which depends the very truth of the Quran. Sometimes these prophecies pertain to physical changes, at others to the actions of men. The prophecies which pertain to the actions of men are of particular importance due to the fact that those whose punishment they predict exert themselves to the utmost of their power to escape it. As such prophecies generally are made in unusually adverse circumstances, their fulfilment appears to be highly improbable and is brought about only by a combination of extraordinary circumstances. So if a *Sūrah* contains a certain prophecy which powerful nations have to exert themselves to render nugatory, the angels who control and superintend the direction of the affairs of the world are instructed to create conditions which may lead to its fulfilment. It is evident that the schemes and machinations of the opponents of a Prophet who makes the prophecy are proportionate in scope and intensity to the greatness of the prophecy and proportionately comprehensive are the means employed by God to frustrate those plans and plots. Since the direction of the affairs of the world is entrusted to angels and since they carry it out under divine laws, a correspondingly large number of them are appointed to guard the subject matter of a *Sūrah* which contains prophecies of the highest import. The angels are directed to take such steps as are necessary for the fulfilment of those prophecies.

In short, the guarding of the *Sūrahs* by angels does not mean their protection when they are being revealed to a Prophet of God. The real work of guardianship begins after they have been revealed and continues till the time when the prophecies mentioned therein are fulfilled. As regards immunity of Quranic revelation from satanic or human interference, every chapter, every verse, every word, even every letter and vowel-point of the Quran is equally safe and under Divine protection and no particular part of it enjoys this protection in greater measure than others.

As the present *Sūrah* contains prophecies about the destruction of such powerful nations as Gog and Magog and about the nullification of Christian false propaganda against Islam, thousands of angels have been on duty to bring about the fulfilment of these mighty prophecies from the very day when the *Sūrah* was revealed.

Western scholars assign this *Sūrah* to the sixth year of the Holy Prophet's ministry at Mecca, but most probably it was revealed in the 4th or 5th year of the Call.

Connection with the Preceding *Sūrah*

According to Muslim commentators of the Quran, the connection of this chapter with the previous one consists in the three questions that the Jews had asked the Holy Prophet about human soul, the Dwellers of the Cave and Dhul-Qarnain. The answer to the first question, they say, was revealed in *Sūrah* Banī Isrā'īl, whilst answers to the second and third questions were revealed in the present chapter (Muḥīṭ). But this view does not accord with actual facts. The present *Sūrah* deals with some other important subjects besides the account of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhul-Qarnain e.g. the parable of two men (vv. 33-44) and the *Isrā'* or Spiritual Journey of Moses (vv. 61-83). As to why this *Sūrah* contains these accounts along with the account of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhul-Qarnain, these commentators have no answer to give. Wherry, however, remarks in his "Commentary on the Quran", that 'this chapter might be called the chapter of wonderful stories.' But this very novel explanation of the reverend gentleman is as far from truth as that given by some Muslim commentators. These far-fetched explanations, in fact, are born of a lack of proper realization by these gentlemen of the real significance and purpose of the *Sūrah*. As a matter of fact, on the basis of some traditions of doubtful authenticity the idea had got into their heads that the Jews had put three questions to the Holy Prophet which this *Sūrah* seeks to answer. So they came to entertain this baseless notion and made no attempt to ponder over and understand the contents of the chapter.

It is incredible that an event should have been mentioned in the Quran at length merely because the Jews had asked the Holy Prophet certain questions about it. The Quran, being a perfect code of laws, was bound to discuss all important questions bearing on human morals, Divine worship, spirituality, social relations, political economy, etc., whether or not the Prophet was asked a question regarding any one of them. If the incidents referred to above had any bearing on any of these subjects, they were bound to be mentioned and discussed in any case; if not, the Quran would not have referred to them, no matter how many questions the Jews might have asked. It is also not reasonable to suggest that these incidents have been mentioned together in the Quran because the Jews happened to inquire about them at the same time. Questions about widely different subjects may be asked at the same time in one meeting and they may be answered in the order in which they are asked in the same meeting; but it is unwise to think that questions must necessarily be answered together in a religious Scripture whose address is not confined to one country or age, irrespective of the fact whether these questions have any bearing on one another. The commentators of the Quran seem to have grievously erred in this regard.

It should also be remembered that the Quran anticipated and replied to all legitimate objections. It did not wait for any question to be asked before answering it. While dealing with a particular subject, the Quran invariably seeks to remove all possible doubts and misgivings to which a discussion of that subject is likely to give rise and which are incidental to it. It leaves alone all matters of passing interest because its Message is not for one particular people but for all peoples and all times. Hence there could be no place in it for the discussion of subjects which concern only one people or one particular period. While dealing with a particular subject it answers only those objections which spontaneously flow from a discussion of it and not the objections which may have been raised by a certain people at the time when it was being revealed. The fact is that this chapter specifically deals with Christianity and the Christian people. There are on record certain sayings of the Holy Prophet which show that he too believed that the present *Sūrah* particularly related to Christians. He is reported to have said, "Whosoever learns by heart the first and the last ten verses of *Sūrah* Al-Kahf will become immune from the evil influence of the *Dajjāl* or Antichrist" (Musnad, vol. 6, pp. 446, 449).

As a matter of fact the reports upon which the commentators have based their conclusions possess no reasonable basis. Most of these have been attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās who was only about four years old at the time when the Meccans are supposed to have sent their deputation to the Jews at Medina and the latter had suggested to them that they should ask the Prophet the aforesaid three questions. These reports are also contradictory of each other and even a hurried and casual perusal of them leaves no doubt about their being manifestly baseless and absurd. Either the Jews themselves knew the answer to the question which they are reported to have asked the Holy Prophet about the human soul or they did not. If they knew it, how could the truth of the Prophet be proved on the basis of an answer which they themselves knew? If they did not know it then how could they know that the one given by the Prophet was correct?

All these facts taken together unmistakably show that the above-mentioned reports about the Holy Prophet having been asked the three questions were the product of some inventive genius and were later passed on as true and genuine traditions.

After having demonstrated the falsity of the above-mentioned reports, it is necessary to add a few words to show the connection of this chapter with the preceding *Sūrah*.

In chapter An-Naḥl, the prophecy had been dealt with at some length that the Holy Prophet would meet with severe opposition from Jews and Christians. This subject was further elaborated in *Sūrah* Banī Isrā’īl in which it was stated that he would be taken to regions where he would live among Jews and would establish new contacts with them and later meet with opposition from both Jews and Christians and in the end would conquer them. *Sūrah* Banī Isrā’īl also mentioned a vision of the Prophet which embodied a prophecy that he would conquer the promised Holy Land of the Jews and alluded to two revolts of the Jews foretold in the book of Deuteronomy. The first revolt took place after the time of David, as a consequence of which the Jews were expelled from their native land. They repented of their sins and their homeland was restored to them. But they relapsed into iniquity and defied God’s commandments and revolted for the second time in the time of Jesus. This second defiance of a Prophet of God brought upon them severer punishment. Their holy places were destroyed and they were exiled from their beloved land of promise. These prophecies had also mentioned the conditions and circumstances through which the first part of the Israelites—the Jews—had to pass. A description of their condition, however, gave rise to an obvious question, viz. when Christians who form the second part of the Mosaic Dispensation have been spared the punishment with which the Jews who were its first part were afflicted, does it not follow that Christians are the inheritors of the Divine blessings and favours promised to the Jews? This question having been dispensed with, there remained one more question to be answered, viz. why are Muslims warned to be on their guard lest they incur Divine displeasure by following in the footsteps of the Jews, and what does this warning portend and what has the future in store for them? These two very natural and pertinent questions have been answered in the present chapter and some light has also been shed on the vicissitudes through which the Christian Faith was to pass. Mention has also been made of how Muslims would behave and make themselves the object of Divine wrath by imitating the iniquitous ways of the Jews. An answer has also been supplied to yet another question viz. what connection is there between these matters and the story of the Dwellers of the Cave, and of Dhul-Qarnain and Gog and Magog, the parable of two gardens and the *Isra'* (Spiritual Ascension) of Moses? The answer which the *Sūrah* under comment gives to this question is that these parables describe in metaphorical language the rise and fall of Christian nations and also the hardships and tribulations that Muslims had to suffer from them on account of their own iniquities.

The Dwellers of the Cave are those early Christians who suffered untold persecution for the sake of their religion and upon whom God bestowed great material and spiritual blessings and favours as a reward for their sacrifices. The incidents mentioned in this chapter had happened long before the time of the Holy Prophet because the successors of those early Christians had forsaken the path of truth by the time he made his appearance. A brief account of the Dwellers of the Cave or early Christians is given to point to the fact that when Jews incurred Divine displeasure by their persistent rejection of truth, God chose these early Christians for the bestowal of His favours. But when later Christians departed from the path of virtue and took to iniquitous ways and practices, they too forfeited Divine favours. This subject has been described in the parable of "two gardens". The "two gardens" symbolized the two periods of the progress and prosperity of the Mosaic Dispensation, viz. (a) the period of prosperity of the Jewish people and (b) the period of the progress and advancement of Christian nations. Or they symbolized the two periods of the Christian people, the one before the time of the Holy Prophet and the other in our own time. *Sūrah* Banī Isrā'īl contains an account of the favours which God bestowed upon the Jews and the present *Sūrah* deals with the great material progress and advancement made by Christian nations.

After this, the *Sūrah* proceeds to say that when the Israelites abused the possession of these "two gardens" and consigned to oblivion God's great blessings and began to look down upon their cousins, the Ishmaelites, and became spiritually so depraved as to think that God's blessings were not so many Divine favours but rewards which they had themselves earned and therefore richly deserved as of right, then God heard the supplications of the despised and oppressed Ishmaelites and destroyed the gardens belonging to the Mosaic Dispensation, i.e. God broke the power of both Jews and Christians and chose the Ishmaelites, who were looked down upon, for His favours and gave them gardens better than those He had given to Jews and Christians.

In order to expand the subject and give it more clarity, the *Isrā'* (Spiritual Journey) of Moses has been mentioned after the parable of the "two gardens". This Spiritual Journey of Moses describes in metaphorical language the great material and moral progress that his followers were to make just as the phenomenal progress of the followers of the Holy Prophet has been described in his own *Isrā'*, mentioned in *Sūrah* Banī Isrā'īl. This *Isrā'* of Moses describes in detail when and how this great advancement would commence and where it would stop and when the Israelites would become deprived of Divine favours which would be transferred to the House of Ishmael. After this we are told that the Ishmaelites, after having become heirs to God's favours, would in their turn incur His displeasure by defying His commandments and would receive severe punishment at the hands of Christian peoples—the second misguided part of the Mosaic Dispensation. The depraved followers of the Holy Prophet would be punished by Gog and Magog who would, at one time, spread over and dominate the entire world. In order to show that these nations lived also even in the time of the Holy Prophet but that God in His own infallible wisdom had kept them in a state of dormancy and had stopped them from spreading over the world, the *Sūrah* has mentioned the causes that hindered their progress. Towards the end of the *Sūrah*, mention is made of one, Dhul-Qarnain, who stood in the way of the domination of the whole world by Gog and Magog. Thus light is thrown on the material and spiritual condition of Christians both in the early stages of their faith and in the Latter Days when power, wealth and material prosperity would make them depart from the path of truth and righteousness. The Dwellers of the Cave symbolize early Christians in the period of their weakness, and Gog and Magog represent them in the heyday of their glory in our own time. Gog and Magog are Christians only in name, being quite strangers to the real spirit of their religion. The *Sūrah* closes with an assurance to the followers of Islam that God would break and shatter the forces of irreligiousness unleashed by Gog and Magog and would bring about the deliverance of Muslims by means of a second Dhul-Qarnain. This second Dhul-Qarnain is the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

In short, the *Sūrah* deals with two epochs of Christianity. In the first epoch the Christians led a life of virtue and righteousness and in the second they have given themselves up entirely to the pursuit and acquisition of material wealth and worldly gains. In between these two periods of Christianity's spiritual glory and its decline and degradation the Islamic Dispensation was established and we are told that when Muslims abandoned the path of virtue and adopted satanic ways, their political power would suffer a great eclipse at the hands of Christians. Later, however, Islam would emerge unscathed from this travail. This prophecy is being fulfilled in our own time.

Such is the close connection that exists between the present *Sūrah* and the preceding one, particularly the connection between the opening verses of this *Sūrah* and the closing verses of the previous *Sūrah*. The preceding *Sūrah* ended with the words, *All praise belongs to Allah Who has taken unto Himself no son and Who has no partner in His Kingdom* and this *Sūrah* opens with the warning that destruction shall overtake a people who propose a son for God. Similarly, the previous *Sūrah* commended as men of knowledge those who worship and glorify God and have firm faith in His promises and denounced as ignorant and deprived of all true knowledge those who assign a son to God. Moreover, while in the previous *Sūrah* true knowledge was defined and explained, the present *Sūrah* defines and explains what constitutes ignorance and lack of true knowledge. Another connection between the closing verses of the last *Sūrah* and the opening verses of the present *Sūrah* is that whereas the closing verses of the preceding chapter categorically denied the existence of any partner in God's Kingdom, in the opening verses of this *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is commanded to warn those who, in the pride of their power, wealth, and means, think that these things are everlasting and that they are immune from Divine punishment. The fourth connection between these two chapters consists in the fact that while the former chapter closed with the words, *And extol His glory with all glorification*, the *Sūrah* under comment opens with severe condemnation and castigation of those who assign a son to God. The Prophet is reported to have said that whosoever reads the first and the last ten verses of *Sūrah* Al-Kahf would be protected against the evil influence of the *Dajjāl* or Antichrist (Musnad). This ḥadīth shows that the Prophet understood that this *Sūrah* was a special antidote against the mischief of the *Dajjāl* who, however, has not been mentioned in it by name. The first ten verses, the recital of which is recommended as a safeguard against the mischief of the *Dajjāl*, speak of a people "who assign a son to God", and they are no other than the present-day Christians. The last ten verses of the *Sūrah* speak of a people who have devoted their entire time, energy and effort to the acquisition of material wealth and who are so engrossed in their mechanistic inventions and discoveries as to think that they can fathom even the very secret of creation. But the greater their inventions and discoveries the more mortifying is their realization that there is no limit to the secrets of nature and no end to God's great and wonderful works. This description also applies to Christian nations of the west today. The *Sūrah* thus constitutes a sort of commentary on the ideas, beliefs, ambitions and doings of these nations. So when the chapters immediately preceding and following this *Sūrah* deal primarily with the Christian Faith and the great material progress and prosperity of its followers, it clearly follows that when the Holy Prophet declared the recitation of the first and last ten verses of this *Sūrah* as an infallible safeguard against the mischief of the *Dajjāl*, by *Dajjāl* he meant present-day corrupt Christian nations. These verses embody a severe indictment of their belief in Jesus as Son of God and of their materialistic tendencies. Thus Christian nations are certainly the *Dajjāl* or Antichrist of the Holy Prophet's traditions.

Subject Matter

The subject matter of the *Sūrah* may briefly be stated as follows: God has revealed the Quran in order to remove the errors that had crept into previous heavenly Scriptures. It warns those who ascribe a son to God that by so doing they incur God's displeasure.

These people hate Islam, but their beginning is not like their end. In the beginning they were very weak and were subjected to bitter persecution. God had mercy on them and delivered them from their trials and tribulations and put them on the road to progress and prosperity. But when they grew rich and prosperous, they became involved in idolatrous practices and instead of turning to God, they turned to the world and were entirely lost in it. Muslims are warned to take a lesson from these people and to be on their guard particularly against three evils in the day of their power and glory, viz. (a) remissness in Divine worship; (b) excessive love of wealth and worldly possessions; and (c) a life of ease and luxury.

The glory and power of Christian nations and degradation and poverty of Muslims are then graphically depicted in "the parable of two men", one rich and the other poor. The rich man—Christian nations—would be proud of his riches while the poor man would turn to God. Pride and conceit would come to grief in the long run and circumstances beyond human control would bring about the rich man's decline and fall.

The *Sūrah* proceeds to give some details of those great changes which were revealed to Moses in his vision. Moses was told in his vision that the development and progress of his Dispensation would fall far short of the great heights which another and a later Dispensation would attain. This later Dispensation would bring to perfection and completion the teaching which the Mosaic Dispensation had left incomplete and Islam would emerge triumphant from the ashes of a declining and decadent Christendom.

After having dealt with the decline and fall of Christian nations and the rise of Islam, the *Sūrah* describes the conditions which would follow the triumph of Islam. We are told that a time would come when Muslims would also turn their backs upon religion and would become entirely engrossed in the pursuit of material wealth and power. To punish them for their sins God would once again grant success and prosperity to Christian nations which for a time had been restrained from advancing into southern and eastern regions. Then would come great destruction upon the world and all nations would become divided into two hostile camps and wedded to two opposite ideologies. Sin and iniquity would prevail and injustice and tyranny become rampant. When things came to such a pass God would create circumstances which would finally check the seemingly irresistible onrush of the flood threatening to engulf the entire world. While dealing with this subject the *Sūrah* clearly hints that the same people would play an important part in arresting and stopping this flood as had once before broken the political power of Gog and Magog—true followers of the Holy Prophet.

In fact, the *Sūrah* is complementary to, and has a deep and beautiful connection with, its predecessor—*Sūrah* Banī Isrā'īl. Its subject matter and the incidents mentioned therein do not lack cohesion as some commentators have mistakenly inferred but, in fact, possess an exquisite order.

اٰيَاتُهَا ١١١ سُوْرَةُ الْكَهْفِ مَكِّيَّةٌ ١٨ رُكُوْعَاتُهَا ١٢

(AL-KAHF)

1. [a]In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.**2041**

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ①

2. [b]All praise belongs to Allah Who has sent down the Book to His servant, and has not put therein any crookedness.**2042**

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلٰى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتٰبَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا ۜ ②

3. *He has made it* a guardian, that [c]it may give warning of a grievous chastisement from Him, and that it may give the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a good reward,**2043**

قَيِّمًا لِّيُنْذِرَ بَاْسًا شَدِيْدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۙ ③

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[a]See 1:1. [b]25:2; 57:10. [c]17:10, 11.

2041. Commentary:

See 1:1.

2042. Important Words:

عوجا (crookedness) is derived from عوج i.e. it was or became crooked, curved or uneven. عوج الامر means, the affair was or became difficult or troublesome. عوج (*iwajun*) means, crookedness, curvity, unevenness or distortion; corruption or deviation from rectitude; deflection; evilness of natural disposition (Lane & Aqrab). See also 14:4.

Commentary:

See the following verses.

2043. Important Words:

قيما (guardian) is derived from قام which means, he stood. They say قام بالامر i.e. he managed, conducted, superintended or looked after the affair. قام على المرءة means, he undertook the maintenance of the woman. قومه (*qawwama-hū*) means, he made it straight or put it right. قيم الامر means, a manager of an affair. الدين القيم means, the right or true religion. قيم therefore, means, true; perfect; manager; superintendent; guardian (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 4:35.

Commentary:

The Quran has been called قيم (guardian) in this verse. According to the different meanings of the Arabic word قيم as shown under Important Words above, the Quran performs a double function. It is a guardian of the previous Scriptures inasmuch as it corrects and removes the errors that have found their way into them, and it is also a guardian for future

4. Wherein they shall abide for ever;**2044**

مّٰكِثِيْنَ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ۙ ٤

5. And that it may warn those [a]who say, ‘Allah has taken *unto Himself* a son.’**2045**

وَّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ۗ ٥

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[a] 17:112; 19:36; 21:27; 25:3; 39:5; 72:4.

generations of men because it takes upon itself their spiritual up-bringing and guides them to the paths which lead to the realization of the sublime object of their life.

The believers have been promised اجرا حسنا (good reward) in the verse. The significance of "good reward" being implicit in the word اجر (reward) which in many places in the Quran has been promised to believers, the addition of the qualifying word حسنا (good) points to the fact that the reward of the believers would be productive of particularly good results. It would not spoil them, but would make them deserving of still greater reward as they would turn God’s favours to good account.

2044. Commentary:

If the verse be taken as referring to the reward of believers in Paradise, it would mean that that reward will last forever and will know no end or diminution. But if it refers to the good reward of this world, then the verse would mean that believers will get a good reward so long as they do good deeds. The continuity of their good reward would depend upon the continuity of their good and righteous deeds.

2045. Commentary:

It is worthy of special note that the Quran is first spoken of as 'giving warning', next as 'giving glad tidings' (v. 3) and then again as 'giving warning' as in the present verse. Disbelievers have been warned twice and in between these two warnings the believers have been given glad tidings. This seems rather strange and the words appear to have been used haphazardly. But it is not so. They serve a very useful purpose. The two 'warnings' and the one 'glad tidings' point to three important periods of the history of Islam. The first 'warning' mentioned in v. 3 pertains to the disbelievers of Mecca and all those people in the time of the Holy Prophet who had rejected his Message and were punished for their rejection and opposition. The 'glad tidings' spoken of in the same verse applies to Muslims who after their enemies had been destroyed enjoyed Divine favours for a very long time and this fulfilled the Divine promise embodied in the words, "Wherein they shall abide forever." For long centuries Muslims ruled over a large part of the globe and enjoyed great power and prestige. The 'second warning' embodied in the present verse refers to Christian nations of "the latter days" and implies a prophecy that after Muslims had enjoyed power and dominion for a long time, their glory would depart

6. [a]No knowledge have they thereof, nor *had* their fathers. [b]Grievous is the word that comes out from their mouths. They speak naught but a lie.2046

مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ ؕ
كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ؕ
اِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْنَ اِلَّا كَذِبًا ۝٦

[a]22:72; 40:43. [b]19:91-92.

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and Christian nations would again come into their own and spread over the entire world and would prove as a bar sinister to the expansion of Islam. These present-day Christian nations of the west have been warned of a severe punishment that is in store for them in the words, *that it may warn those Who say, Allah has taken unto Himself a son*. Thus this giving of warnings twice and interspersing these two warnings with glad tidings for Muslims implied three great prophecies viz. (a) the discomfiture and destruction of the Holy Prophet's opponents in his own time; (b) the phenomenal rise of Muslims to power and glory and, after the departure of Muslim glory, (c) the punishment that is in store for the nations who say that Allah has taken unto Himself a son. The signs of this Divine punishment are already becoming too manifest to be overlooked.

2046. Commentary:

The expression كبرت كلمة (grievous is the word) is really كبرت هي كلمة which means that the saying of this word is very grievous, or that it is very grievous even to open the lips with this word and it is against reason and common sense to utter it. The verse constitutes a severe indictment of the doctrine that Jesus is the son of God. This doctrine is not only blasphemous but also revolting to human intellect. It is an insult to human understanding to say that a weak and helpless man who could not save himself from being hung on the cross was God or the Son of God. Misguided and erring leaders of the Christian Church fabricated a most heinous and blasphemous doctrine without even a modicum of sense or reason to support it. They were fully aware of the fact that the disciples of Jesus and early Christians were strict monotheists and yet they departed from their pristine Faith. The later Christians, however, had with them the excellent Islamic teaching about the Unity of God, but they did not benefit by it, nor by the monotheistic beliefs of their own forebears. Without rhyme or reason they ascribed Godhead to a weak human being.

The words, *they speak naught but a lie*, signify that Jesus never taught such a foolish doctrine but later Christians themselves invented it and they are to blame for it. In fact, even the canonical Gospels lend no support to this blasphemous doctrine. No doubt the Bible has used the epithet "son of God" about Jesus but so has it also done about several other persons. For instance in Exod. 4:22 we have, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born." See also Gen. 6:2, John 10:35, etc.

7. [a]So haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death for sorrow after them if they believe not in this discourse.**2047**

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰۤى اٰثَارِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا ۝٧

8. Verily, We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it, [b]that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct.**2048**

اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِيْنَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۝٨

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[a]26:4. [b]5:49; 6:166; 11:8; 67:3.

2047. Important Words:

باخع نفسک (grieve thyself to death). باخع is active participle from بخع . They say بخع الشاة i.e. he slaughtered the lamb with extraordinary effectiveness so that the knife reached the back of the neck; the verb بخع is used to denote the doing of anything to a great extent or with extraordinary effectiveness or energy. بخع له نصحه means, he gave him his advice most sincerely. بخع نفسه means, he killed himself with wrath or grief. The Quranic expression فلعلک باخع نفسک means, And maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief being beyond measure eager for their becoming Muslims (Lane).

Commentary:

It is clear from the context that the people spoken of in these verses are the western Christian nations. God had blessed them with material comforts and wealth and had bestowed upon them power, prestige and dominion. But they fell into the grievous error of taking a frail human being as the son of God. The Holy Prophet's solicitude and concern for the spiritual well-being of these people and his deep grief over their opposition to truth had almost killed him. But such is human ingratitude that from the very people for whom he felt and grieved so much he received nothing but abuse, invective and ridicule. Never, indeed, were selfless love and kindness so ill requited!

The words, *if they believe not in this discourse*, allude to the reason of the Prophet's grief. They mean to say that the Quran contains the solution of all those difficult problems that Christian nations had to face in this life, yet these people who have made so much progress in material sciences are so backward in the spiritual science that they are inviting death and destruction by refusing to accept true guidance.

2048. Commentary:

The words, *We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it*, point to the great moral lesson that nothing in this world has been created in vain. Of all the innumerable things that God has created there is not one which has not its particular use or is

9. [a]And We shall make all that is thereon a barren soil.[2049]

وَاِنَّا لَجٰعِلُوْنَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيْدًا جُرُزًا ؕ﴿٩﴾

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[a] 18:41.

devoid of all good. All of them add to the beauty of human life. Muslims were expected always to keep in view the great truth underlined in these simple words and to devote their time and energy to delving into the great secrets of nature and to exploring the unlimited properties of its elements. But they ignored this supreme lesson while the Christian peoples of the West remembered it well with the result that they became the most advanced and powerful nations in the world.

It is to be regretted, however, that while Western nations greatly benefited by the lesson taught in the words, *We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it*, they neglected the one embodied in the words, *that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct.* No doubt they sought after knowledge and made great advances in science. But the object of the advance and expansion of knowledge is that man's conduct may become pure and human life more peaceful. But these nations, instead of employing their knowledge and resources to the service of man, have ended by making human life miserable and unbelievable. They have failed to set an example of good conduct and have put their scientific researches to evil use and have thereby laid the foundations of injustice, tyranny and corruption in the world. It is probably to this fact that the present verse refers.

2049. Important Words:

صعيدا (soil) is derived from صعد. They say صعد فى السلم i.e. he ascended the ladder. صارت الحديقة صعيدا means, the orchard became a desert, i.e. land without trees or herbage. صعيد means, high or elevated land or ground; land or ground without any trees; the surface of earth; wide or an ample place; a road; a grave. (Lane & Aqrab).

جرزا (barren) is derived from جرز. They say جرزه i.e. he cut it or exterminated it. جرزه الزمان means, time destroyed or extirpated him or it. The Arabs say جرز ما على المائدة i.e. he ate all that was on the table and did not leave anything; he ate quickly. ارض جرز means, land in which there is no herbage or from which the water is cut off so that it is dried up and is without herbage; or land that produces no herbage (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that all the things of this world are transitory. Their acquirement is not the end and object of human life. On the contrary, they have been created to serve higher and more sublime purposes—to be used for the service of humanity. But Christian nations of the west, after having acquired wealth, power and dominion and after having made great discoveries and inventions, have not turned their scientific achievements to the service of mankind, but instead have employed them generally to add to human misery. As these scientific

10. Dost thou think that the People of the Cave and the Inscription were a wonder among Our Signs?[2050]

اَمۡ حَسِبۡتَ اَنَّ اَصۡحٰبَ الۡكَهۡفِ
وَالرَّقِيۡمِ ۙ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ اٰيٰتِنَا عَجَبًا ۝۱۰

discoveries and inventions have not fulfilled the purpose of making human life more peaceful and beautiful, all the works of these peoples would be brought to naught and entirely obliterated. The expression, *And We shall make all that is thereon a barren soil,* does not mean that the whole world will be destroyed. It only refers to the destruction of the works of Christian nations to whom these verses particularly apply.

Since a similar expression viz. صعيدا زلقا (barren ground) used in v. 41 of this *Sūrah* in connection with the parable of "two gardens" clearly applies to the works of Western nations, as shown by the context, the expression صعيدا جرزا (barren soil) must also be taken as applying to them. The words صعيدا جرزا as shown under Important Words mean, a land without herbage or a land of which the herbage has been cut or eaten. Now, 'herbage' in Quranic terminology stands for the works of men, and according to this sense of the word, the verse would mean that all the progress that the western nations were to make and all their handiworks, their lofty and stately buildings, the beautiful scenery of their land and all their pomp, glory and grandeur would be destroyed. This means that a terrible visitation is in store for them.

2050. Important Words:

الكهف (the Cave). اكتهف الكهف means, he entered the cave. كهف means, a cave excavated out of a mountain in the form of a house; a spacious cave; a place of refuge (Aqrab).

الرقيم (the Inscription) is derived from رقم which means, he wrote a writing; he sealed, stamped, imprinted or impressed. رقم الكتاب means, he marked the writing with the dots or points, and made its letters distinct or plain.

رقمه (*raqqama-hū*) means, he figured, variegated or decorated the garment or piece of cloth and made it striped or marked it with stripes. رقمت الشيء means, I marked the thing so as to distinguish it from other things, as, for instance, by writing and the like. رقم البعير means, he cauterized the camel. رقيم signifies any garment or piece of cloth figured, variegated or decorated with a certain or known figuring or decoration, such as is a mark; a book or writing. الرقيم means, the Inscription (Lane & Aqrab). For different accounts of this word see at the end of the commentary of the present verse.

Commentary:

The verse declares the Dwellers of the Cave to be no novel or out of the ordinary thing but as only one of the so many signs of God. There was nothing about them which might be considered a departure from the ordinary laws of nature. It is, however, very regrettable that while according to this verse the Dwellers of the Cave were no object of wonder but were only a sign of God, many commentators of the Quran have woven fantastic legends around them.

Who were these Dwellers of the Cave, where did they live and what were the conditions and circumstances under which they had to live, are some of the questions that have agitated the minds of commentators for hundreds of years. A good clue to the solution of these baffling questions is to be found in some of the stories related by Muslim historians, Ibn Isḥāq being most prominent among them. These stories are summarized below:

1. Ibn Isḥāq relates that when idolatry first found its way among Christians, those of them who were strict monotheists being sorely distressed over the condition of their coreligionists renounced their company. This happened in the time of the Roman Emperor Decius, who was a great persecutor of Christians. Some Christian young men who refused to worship idols were arrested and brought before him. He asked them to think over and revise their attitude and himself went on a journey. Instead of submitting to the Emperor's command they sought safety in flight and took refuge in a cave. On his return from the journey the Emperor ordered these young men to be brought before him. They feared that they would be found out and killed. So they prayed long and fervently in the cave and had hardly finished their prayer when they fell into a deep sleep. Their belongings lay beside them and their dog kept watch at the entrance of the cave. The search for them brought their pursuers to the mouth of the cave but no one could muster enough courage to enter it. The Emperor was counselled to raise a wall before its mouth. He accepted the advice and the mouth of the cave was sealed up. (Ma'ānī, vol. v, p. 16).

2. There is another story to the effect that a disciple of Jesus arrived in a town of which the ruler had commanded that every newcomer, before entering the town, should prostrate himself before the idol at its entrance. The disciple refused to carry out the king's command. On the contrary, he began to preach against idol-worship which led to many inhabitants of the town becoming Christians. One day, as the result of a scuffle between the king's son and the owner of a *hammām* (bath) the former was killed. The owner of the *hammām* fled. Some young men who had embraced Christianity, apprehending arrest, also fled and along with a landlord, who too had embraced Christianity, took refuge in a cave. The story then proceeds as narrated above by Ibn Isḥāq (Ma'ānī, vol. v, p. 19).

3. Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said that he was with Mu'āwiyah in an expedition against the Romans when they saw the cave in which اصحاب کہف (Dwellers of the Cave) were believed to have lived. Mu'āwiyah sent some of his men to enter the cave but a storm suddenly arose and prevented them from entering it. According to another narration Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said that he had even seen the remains of اصحاب کہف which seemed to be 300 years old (Manthūr; vol. 4, pp. 22, 214).

4. According to Abū Ḥayyān there is a cave in Spain which is supposed to contain the dead bodies of the Dwellers of the Cave and also of their dog. Ibn Abī ‘Aṭṭiyyah also claims to have seen the cave where according to him the corpses of اصحاب كهف have remained for four or five hundred years. He writes that there are to be found near Granada the ruins of a town which is called the town of Decius. It contains very weird tombs built of stones (Muḥīṭ, vol. 6, p. 102).

5. Identical accounts have been given by Ibn Kathīr and by ‘Abdur Razzāq and Ibn Ḥātim in Durr-e-Manthūr (vol. 4, p. 224). Some commentators of the Quran have gone so far as to give even the names of the Dwellers of the Cave. For instance, Ibn Kathīr (vol. 6, p. 131) has, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, given the names of these people and their number.

6. The memorable story of the "Seven Sleepers", as told by Gibbon in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, provides an important clue to the solution of the mystery that surrounds the Dwellers of the Cave. "When the Emperor Decius", says Gibbon, "persecuted the Christians, seven noble youths of Ephesus concealed themselves in a spacious cavern in the side of an adjacent mountain, where they were doomed to perish by the tyrant, who gave orders that the entrance should be firmly secured with a pile of huge stones. They immediately fell into a deep slumber, which was miraculously prolonged, without injuring the powers of life, during a period of one hundred and eighty-seven years. At the end of that time, the slaves of Adolius, to whom the inheritance of the mountain had descended, removed the stones, to supply materials for some rustic edifice; the light of the sun darted into the cavern, and the seven sleepers were permitted to awake. After a slumber, as they thought, of a few hours, they were pressed by the calls of hunger and resolved that Iamblichus, one of their members, should secretly return to the city to purchase bread for the use of his companions. The youth could no longer recognize the once familiar aspect of his native country; and his surprise was increased by the appearance of a large cross, triumphantly erected over the principal gate of Ephesus. His singular dress and obsolete language confounded the baker to whom he offered an ancient medal of Decius as the current coin of the empire; and Iamblichus, on the suspicion of a secret treasure, was dragged before the judge. Their mutual inquiries produced the amazing discovery that almost two centuries had elapsed since Iamblichus and his friends had escaped from the rage of a pagan tyrant. The bishop of Ephesus, the clergy, the magistrates, the people, and, it is said, the Emperor Theodosius himself, hastened to visit the cavern of the Seven Sleepers, who bestowed their benediction, related their story, and at the same instant peaceably expired" (chapter 33).

The story of the Dwellers of the Cave may also be taken to apply to Joseph of Arimathea and his companions. According to William of Malmesbury, Joseph was sent to

Britain by St. Philip and having been given a small island in Somersetshire there constructed with twisted twigs the first Christian Church in Britain, afterwards to become the Abbey of Glastonbury. According to another account Joseph is said to have wandered into Britain in the year 63 A.D. …according to the legends which grew up under the care of the monk, the first Church of Glastonbury was a little wattled building erected by Joseph of Arimathea as the leader of the twelve apostles sent over to Britain from Gaul by St. Philip (Enc. Brit., 10th edition & 13th edition, under Joseph of Arimathaea & Glastonbury).

All these accounts may appear to be no more than picturesque legends or later interpolations or they may belong to the realm of poetry rather than genuine tradition but they do not seem to be completely devoid of all reality and are not without an undercurrent of truth. Anyhow, they possess a deep and far-reaching significance. Joseph of Arimathea may or may not have gone to England or that country may or may not be "the cave", under discussion, but the story of the Dwellers of the Cave does symbolize the story of the early persecution and later rise and expansion of Christianity.

Our recent research, however, assigns the catacombs at Rome rather than Glastonbury as the site of "the cave" and a study of early Christianity lends great weight to this research. Accounts of the Dwellers of the Cave given above by Ibn Isḥāq and other historians also seem to substantiate and reinforce this recent theory.

From these accounts the following facts unmistakably emerge:

(1) That early Christians were believers in the Unity of God and that they suffered great persecution for their beliefs.

(2) That some of these Christians fearing persecution and death took refuge in a cave in the time of a king variously known as Dacyuse, Dacyānūse or, in Latin, Decius.

(3) That the persecutors of these Christians were idol-worshippers who sought to compel them to worship their own idols and offer sacrifices to them.

(4) That these young men came out of the cave in the time of a king named Nandūsīs or, as Gibbon says, Theodosius.

Now it is a well-known historical fact that early Christians had to suffer untold persecutions at the hands of the idolatrous Roman Emperors for their belief in the Oneness of God. This persecution began as early as in the time of the notorious Emperor Nero who is said to have set fire to Rome and fiddled while that great seat of learning and civilization was burning. It continued intermittently till the reign of the Emperor Constantine who became converted to Christianity and made it the religion of the State. According to Tacitus Nero inflicted most inhuman tortures upon Christians in order to shift the blame for the burning of Rome on to them. He caused them to be hanged, burned alive and thrown to hungry dogs. Even St. Peter is said to have met his death at this cruel Emperor’s hands. Tertullian states that Peter was crucified under Nero, and Origen adds that at his own request he was crucified head downwards…Early in the third century the grave of Peter and Paul was shown in the Vatican and their relics were moved to the catacombs in 258 A. D. Among the tombs to be lately discovered in the catacombs are some of those disciples whose names have been mentioned in the Gospels and with whom Peter is said to have stayed (Enc. Brit., Every Man's Encyclopaedia, & Gibbon's Roman Empire, under Peter, Catacombs & Nero, and Story of Rome by Norwood Young).

The persecution continued in the reign of Domitian. But it was not only tyrants like Nero and Domitian who persecuted Christians but great and virtuous princes like Trajan and Marcus Aurelius also punished these unoffending people with death, exile and imprisonment. They had, however, a brief respite of about forty years after which their persecution again began with renewed fury under the Emperor Decius. This time the persecution was so severe that compared with it the former condition was a state of perfect freedom and security. Decius wanted to restore the religion and institutions of ancient Rome and with this object in view he began a systematic extermination of Christianity. The edicts of Diocletian in 303 A.D., however, surpassed all anti-Christian measures. By these edicts Christian Churches in all the provinces of the empire were demolished, all their sacred books were publicly burnt and the property of the Church was confiscated and Christians were put out of the protection of the land (Gibbon's Roman Empire).

To save themselves from this most cruel and inhuman persecution the helpless Christians had to seek refuge in concealment and from a study of the catacombs at Rome it appears that they proved havens of safety for them. These catacombs which have been referred to in the Quran as "the cave" were admirably suited to the needs of Christians who had to remain in concealment for long intervals. They had built schools and chapels and also buried the dead bodies of their saints and holy men in them. Though some of the statements as to the employment of the catacombs in times of persecution may have been somewhat exaggerated, we have clear evidence that they were used as places of refuge from the fury of the heathen, in which the believers—especially the bishops and clergy, who would naturally be the first objects of attack—might secrete themselves until the storm had blown over. This was a purpose for which they were admirably adapted both by the intricacy of their labyrinthine passages, in which anyone not possessing the clue would inevitably be lost, and the numerous small chambers and hiding places at different levels which might be passed unperceived in the dark by pursuers. As a rule also the catacombs had more than one entrance, and frequently communicated with a sand-quarry; so that while one entrance was carefully watched, the pursued might escape in a totally different direction by another. These catacombs have several stories which are connected with each other by a vast labyrinth of narrow galleries, interspersed with small chambers, excavated at successive levels. These dark, narrow and labyrinthic galleries have gone on for hundreds of miles. Padri Marchi has estimated the length of the galleries at from 800 to 900 miles and the number of interments at between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000. Martigny's estimate is 587 miles and Northcote's lower still, at not less than 350 miles (Enc. Brit., 9th edition, under Catacombs).

From the inscriptions on the tombstones in the catacombs it appears that the early Christians were strict monotheists. There is not a single word on the inscriptions which indicated that they believed in Jesus as God or the Son of God. He has been represented only as a shepherd or a Prophet of God, which he really was. Nor has Mary, his mother, been mentioned as anything more than a pious woman. The story of the tribe of the Prophet Jonah and that of Noah's flood find repeated and prominent mention in the inscriptions and engravings. This clearly shows that early Christians regarded the Old Testament with greater respect than do present-day Christians. It also appears that Christians who took refuge in the catacombs kept dogs at their entrance which would announce the approach of strangers by their barking.

To be brief, the account of the Dwellers of the Cave constitutes a representation of the history of early Christians and shows how they conducted a vigorous campaign against idolatry and polytheistic beliefs and suffered untold persecutions for their belief in the Unity of God and how their successors ended by disowning almost all the fundamental doctrines of their Faith. The position of "the cave", however, is of secondary importance, though from the facts narrated above its description as given in v. 18 applies more fully and in greater detail and exactness to the catacombs at Rome than to any other place.

Similarly, very strange and widely divergent accounts of الرقيم (the Inscription) have been given by commentators. According to some it was a tablet of lead or copper or a slab of stone on which the names of the Dwellers of the Cave, their ancestry, etc., were inscribed. Some say it was the name of the town or village from which they came or the name of the mountain or valley in which that "cave" was situated, yet according to others it was the name of their dog or the coin which they used. Leaving aside the mental wanderings of commentators, these two words—"cave" and "inscription"—represent the two most prominent aspects of the Christian Faith, viz. that it began as a religion of renunciation and withdrawal from the world and ended by becoming a religion of entire engrossment in worldly affairs, a religion of business and trade in a world of writings and inscriptions. See also Tafsīr-e-Kabīr by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II.

11. When the young men betook themselves for refuge to the Cave and said, ‘Our Lord, bestow on us mercy from Thyself, and provide for us right guidance in our affair.’[2051]	إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَّهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ اَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ⑪
12. So We sealed up their ears in the Cave for a number of years.[2052]	فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا ⑫
13. Then We raised them up that We might know which of the two parties would better reckon the time that they had tarried.[2053]	ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ اَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ اَحْصٰى لِمَا لَبِثُوْٓا اَمَدًا ⑬ ع ١ ١٣

2051. Important Words:

رشدا (right guidance). رشد (*rashadun*) is the noun-infinitive from رشد (*rashida*) as رشد (*rushdun*) is the noun-infinitive from رشد (*rashada*). رشد او رشد means, he took or followed a right way or course or direction. They say رشد امرہ (*rashida*) i.e. he took or followed a right course in his affair. بلغ رشدہ (*rushda-hū*) means, he attained years of discretion, when he was able to take or follow a right course. Some say that رشد (*rushdun*) relates to the things of the present life and to those of the life to come; and رشد (*rashadun*) only to those of the life to come but this distinction does not accord with Arabic idiom. (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that the Dwellers of the Cave prayed to God for His Mercy and deliverance from the difficult situation in which they found themselves.

2052. Important Words:

ضربنا علی اذانھم (We sealed up their ears). The word ضرب has a vast variety of meanings. They say ضرب علی یدہ i.e. he prevented him from doing a thing that he had begun. ضرب علی اذنه means, he prevented him from hearing. So the Quranic expression ضربنا علی اذانھم means, We prevented them from hearing. It also means, We made them sleep by preventing any sound from penetrating into their ears in consequence of which they would have awoke (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:274 & 4:35.

Commentary:

Literally the verse means, We prevented any sound from penetrating into their ears, i.e. for a number of years they remained wholly cut off from the affairs of the outside world and did not know what was happening there.

2053. Important Words:

امدا (the time) is from امد (*amida*).

R. 2.

14. We will relate to thee their story with truth: They were young men who believed in their Lord and [a]We increased them in guidance.[2054]

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ اٰمَنُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنٰهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٤﴾

15. And We strengthened their hearts, when they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never shall we call upon any

وَّرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَا۠ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ اِذًا شَطَطًا ﴿١٥﴾

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[a] 8:3; 47:18.

They say ضرب له اجلا i.e. he assigned or appointed for him or it a term or limit. بلغ اجله means, he or it reached or attained his or its utmost or extreme extent, term etc. اجل means, time considered with regard to its end; the utmost or the extreme extent, term, limit, point or reach; the period of life which one has reached; each of the two terms of the life of a man, i.e. the time of his birth and the time of his death; the starting place and the finish (of horses in a race); any space of time; a space of time of unknown limit; a particular time etc. The difference between اجل and زمان is that whereas the former is time considered with regard to its end, the latter is time considered with regard to both its end and its beginning. Similarly, the difference between اجل and ابد is that while the former means time limited in duration, the latter means time everlasting. The Arabs say الدنيا اجل و الاخرة ابد i.e. the present state of existence is limited in duration, but the final state of existence is everlasting (Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

There were two parties among the early Christians: (a) Those who did not like to dissemble or dissimulate and knowing no compromise with unbelief and idolatry suffered persecution for their faith with patience and fortitude. These people had to seek refuge in caves: (b) Those who thinking prudence to be the better part of valour, concealed their faith and saved themselves from persecution. Of these two parties the one which suffered most were in a better position to remember the duration of the period of their persecution. Or it may be that the words "two parties" refer to the persecutors and the persecuted.

2054. Commentary:

The verse shows that many fantastic stories were current about the Dwellers of the Cave in the Holy Prophet's time. The truth about them, however, is that they were young men of noble conduct who had staked god beside Him; *if we did*, we should indeed have uttered an enormity.[2055]

16. [a]These, our people, have taken *for worship other* gods beside Him. Wherefore do they not bring a clear authority for them? And [b]who is more unjust than he who invents a lie concerning Allah?[2056]

هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ؕ لَوْلَا يَاْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍۢ بَيِّنٍ ؕ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ؕ ﴿١٦﴾

17. And *now* when you have withdrawn from them and from that which they worship beside Allah, then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will unfold for you His mercy and will provide for you comfort in *this* affair of yours.'[2057]

وَاِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوْهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَاْوٗٓا اِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَمْرِكُمْ مِّرْفَقًا ﴿١٧﴾

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[a]21:25; 25:4. [b]6:145; 7:38; 10:18; 11:19.

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their all for the sake of their Lord and that their faith had steadily grown under persecution.

2055. Commentary:

Though their people were against them and mercilessly persecuted them, yet they could not be intimidated into giving up their faith. God had strengthened their hearts and had bestowed upon them firmness of faith.

2056. Commentary:

By using the words "our people" the verse shows that the people to whom the Dwellers of the Cave belonged were idol-worshippers. Such were the Romans who worshipped idols.

2057. Commentary:

The verse brings to light the fact that those monotheistic young men were no scattered individuals but they formed part of an organized and disciplined religious community whose members met frequently in private.

The word كهف (Cave) used here shows that when these young men talked of taking shelter in "the cave" they had some specific cave in mind. This cave seems to have already been used as a place of refuge by Roman slaves who had fled from their cruel masters.

It also appears from this verse that before they took refuge in "the cave"

18. And thou couldst see the sun, as it rose, move away from their Cave on the right, and when it set, turn away from them on the left; and they were in the spacious hollow thereof. This is among the Signs of Allah. [a]He whom Allah guides is rightly guided; but he whom He adjudges astray, for him thou wilt find no helper *or* guide.2058

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَّزٰوَرُ عَنْ
كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ
تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِيْ فَجْوَةٍ
مِّنْهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ
فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ
وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ﴿١٨﴾ ع ٢ ١٤

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[a] 7:179; 17:98; 39:37-38.

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these young men had decided that they would repair to that particular cave for shelter when persecution exceeded all bearable bounds and it became impossible for them to live any longer among their people. The words, *And now when you have withdrawn from them*, show that they had already been the victims of a severe social boycott and had lived apart from their people in a separate group of their own.

2058. Important Words:

تزاور (move away) is in reality تتزاور which is derived from تزاور (*tazāwara*) which again is derived from زار. They say زاره i.e. he visited him. ازورعنه (*izwarra*) or تزاورعنه (*tazāwara*) means, he declined or turned aside from it (Lane & Aqrab).

تقرض (turn away) is derived from قرض . They say قرضه i.e. he cut it. قرضت الوادی means, I passed through or across the valley. قرض المكان means, he turned aside or away from the place. The Quranic expression واذا غربت تقرضهم ذات الشمال means, when it set to leave them behind on the left; to pass by and beyond them leaving them on its left; to turn aside or away from them on the left (Lane & Aqrab).

فجوة (spacious hollow) is derived from فجا. They say فجا الباب i.e. he opened the door. فجا رجليه means, he parted his legs wide or straddled to make water. فجوة means, an opening or intervening space or an intermediate wide space between two things; a wide tract or a wide or depressed tract of land; the court or yard of a house; the part between the two sides of the solid hoof (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse describes the position of the Cave. It appears that the people referred to above lived in very high regions in the north, and the Cave was so situated that it faced north-west, for the sun passes a place which has its face to the north from right to left.

The word فجوة (spacious hollow)

R. 3.

19. Thou mightest deem them awake, whilst they are asleep; and We shall cause them to turn over to the right and to the left, their dog stretching out his forelegs on the threshold. If thou hadst had a look at them, thou wouldst surely have turned away from them in fright, and wouldst surely have been filled with awe of them.[2059]

وَ تَحْسَبُهُمْ اَيْقَاظًا وَّ هُمْ رُقُوْدٌ ۖۗ
وَّ نُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ۖۗ
وَ كَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيْدِ ؕ
لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا
وَّ لَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ﴿۱۹﴾

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shows that the Cave covered a vast area. The catacombs at Rome which still exist confirm this view. They enclose a vast area, which has been estimated variously as extending over as many as 870 miles. It also appeals that the catacombs admitted very little light. The Cave was made in such a way as to serve as a hiding place. St. Jerome who visited the catacombs in the 4th century says, "It is all so dark that the language of the Prophet (Ps. 55.15) seems to be fulfilled, 'let them go down quick into Hell'. Only occasionally is light let in to mitigate the horror of the gloom, and then not so much through a window as through a hole" (Enc. Brit., 11th edition, vol. 5, p. 491).

By pointing to the position of the Cave which faced northward, God intended to warn Muslims that they had an enemy in northern regions about whom they should particularly be on their guard. Muslims disregarded this timely warning and fell easy victims to the machinations of their enemy. Instead of presenting a united front they fell out among themselves and facilitated his task. The intrigues of the Abbasids of Baghdad and their unseemly approaches to the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople for help on the one hand and the intrigues of the Moors in Spain with the Vatican on the other, led to their progressive decline and ultimate destruction. The solidarity of Islam suffered a fatal blow from these internal dissensions.

2059. Important Words:

ايقاظا (awake) is the plural of يقظ (*yaqiẓun*) which is derived from يقظ (*yaqiẓa*) which means, he awoke; he did not sleep. (*yaqiẓun*) means, a man waking; a man vigilant, wary, cautious, or in a state of preparation; having his attention roused and possessing knowledge and much intelligence (Lane & Aqrab).

رقود (asleep) is the plural of راقد which is derived from رقد which means, he slept. They say رقد عن الامر i.e. he abstained or held back from the affair; he neglected it. رقدت السوق

20. And so We raised them up that they might question one another. One of them said, [a]'How long have you tarried?' They said, 'We have tarried a day or part of a day.' *Others* said, 'Your Lord knows best *the*

وَكَذٰلِكَ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ قَالَ
قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۭ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا
يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۭ قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ
اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ۭ فَابْعَثُوْٓا اَحَدَكُمْ

means, the market became stagnant or dull (Lane & Aqrab).

وصيد (threshold) is derived from وصد. They say وصد بالمكان i.e. he remained in the house. اوصد الباب means, he closed the door. وصيد means, a court or open space in front of a house; a threshold of a door or entrance; a door or entrance; a fold for sheep or goats; a house of stones made in the mountains for flocks or herds (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse does not refer to the Dwellers of the Cave in the early days of Christianity but to Christian nations in the Holy Prophet's own time. Muslims of that time were warned that Christian nations in northern regions were then lying in a state of dormancy but they would soon rise from their deep sleep of centuries and would spread all over the world and hold it under their sway. Before that time Muslims should make effective preparation to protect themselves against their devastating onslaughts. Muslims threw this timely Divine warning to the winds. After Caliph Uthmān, internecine dissensions rent them. They became heedless of the danger that existed in the shape of the Byzantine Empire by their side. If they then had attacked and conquered it, for which they had quite legitimate reasons as the Romans had first attacked them, the political map of the world would now be quite different from what it is.

The words, *their dog stretching out his forelegs on the threshold,* refer to the great fondness of Christian peoples for their dogs. The words may also be taken as referring to the Byzantine Empire which then kept guard over Europe on both sides of the Sea of Marmora. This sea looks like a dog keeping watch with his forelegs stretched forth on both sides. The Turks conquered this country in the 15th century but it was too late. By then a great political awakening had taken place among the Christian nations of the northern regions. If in the day of their power and glory the Moors and the Abbasids had made common cause to subdue and crush these nations, Islam would have spread to these parts and mankind would have been spared much misery and bloodshed.

The expression, *If thou had had a look at them, thou wouldst surely have turned away from them in fright,*

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[a] 2:260; 23:113-114.

بِوَرِقِكُمْ هٰذِهٖۤ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ
اَيُّهَاۤ اَزْكٰى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ
وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ اَحَدًا ⑳ ؏ نصف القرآن

time you have tarried. Now send one of you with these silver coins of yours to the city; and let him see which of its *inhabitants* has the purest food, and let him bring you provisions thereof. And let him be courteous and let him not inform anyone about you.'[2060]

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refers to the time when Christian nations will have acquired great political power. Till very recently the nationals of all western countries were treated with great respect and fear all over the East. It constitutes a proof positive of the Divine source of the Quran that it foretold this fact hundreds of years ago when Christian nations were yet sunk in a deep sleep of centuries and the wildest stretch of imagination could not have foreseen the power and glory to which they subsequently rose.

2060. Commentary:

Like its predecessor this verse also speaks not of early Christians who took shelter in "the cave" but of the Christian nations of the west after they had spread all over the world. The words, "We raised them up", refer to the great progress which these nations were destined to make in future. It is a peculiarity of the Quranic style that it uses the past tense for events which are to take place in future in order to emphasize the inevitability and certainty of their occurrence. The words mean to say that the day is sure to come when God will bring about an awakening among these people who are now asleep.

The words, *one of them said; How long have you tarried*, signify that Christian nations would begin to feel that it was now time for them to bestir themselves and shake off their lethargy. This awakening took place in the time of the Crusades when the Monarchs of England, France and Germany made common cause and the whole of Europe combined to make a concerted attack upon Muslims to wrest the Holy Land from their hands.

The expression, يوما او بعض يوم i.e. a day or part of a day, does not mean that the Dwellers of the Cave were not certain as to how long they remained asleep. According to Arabic idiom the expression denotes an indefinite period of time. Elsewhere the Quran has specified as one thousand years the period for which Christian nations of the west remained in a state of sleep or inactivity. In vv. 20:103,104 we have, *The day when the trumpet will be blown. And on that day We shall gather the sinful together blue-eyed. They will talk to one another in a low tone: You tarried only ten days*, The words "ten days" here stand for ten centuries and the word زرقا (blue-eyed) clearly refers to the peoples of the west who generally have blue

21. 'For, if they should come to know of you, they would stone you or make you return to their religion and then will you never prosper.'**2061**

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوْكُمْ
أَوْ يُعِيْدُوْكُمْ فِيْ مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوْٓا
إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٢١﴾

22. And thus did We disclose them *to the people* that they might know [a]that the promise of Allah was true, and that, [b]as to the Hour, there was no doubt about it. *And remember the time*

وَكَذٰلِكَ أَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوْٓا أَنَّ
وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۚ
إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا

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[a]31:34; 35:6. [b]15:86; 20:16; 22:8.

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eyes. It is a well-known historical fact that the foundations of British power in the east were laid in the beginning of the seventeenth century, in about 1611 A.D., when a British commercial company was allowed to open its first industrial concern in Surat and began to do business in the Bay of Bengal (March of Man, published by Enc. Brit. Society). This period approximates to one thousand years after the Holy Prophet began to preach his Mission in 611 A. D. The secret of the British power in subsequent centuries lay in their success in obtaining a foothold in the East. Other European nations only followed in the wake of the British people.

The word طعاما (provisions) in the verse under comment does not mean 'cooked food' as is generally misunderstood. It possesses a much wider significance and may mean, wheat, barley, millet, dates or other articles of food (Lane). The words, *and let him bring you provisions thereof,* refer to the import of Indian articles of food, especially wheat, by European countries for about 200 years. European businessmen had a special knack of being gentle and courteous in their commercial dealings. To this characteristic of theirs the expression وليتلطف (and let him be courteous) refers.

The words, *and let him not inform any one about you,* refer to the quiet and unobtrusive penetration of Western influence in the East, particularly in India—the undivided India of pre-Partition days.

2061. Commentary:

The verse means to say that if the people to whom you are sending trade parties became acquainted with your real intentions, or before your feet became firmly established in their country some political quarrel or commercial disagreement arose and you were overpowered, then you would either have to quit their country or embrace their religion. In either ease you would fail to gain a permanent foothold and all your dreams of establishing a great empire in their country would come to naught.

when people disputed among themselves concerning them, and said, ‘Build over them a building.’ Their Lord knew them best. Those who won their point said, ‘We will, surely, build a place of worship over them.’2062

ابْنُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ بُنْيَانًا ؕ رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ؕ
قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ غَلَبُوْا عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهِمْ
لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

23. Some say, ‘They were three, the fourth was their dog,’ and *others* say, ‘They were five, the sixth was their dog,’ guessing at random. And *yet others* say, ‘They were seven, the eighth was their dog.’ Say, ‘My Lord knows best their number. None knows them except a few.’ So argue not concerning them except with arguing *that is* overpowering, nor seek information about them from any one of them.2063

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ
رَجْمًۢا بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَبْعَةٌ
وَّثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ؕ قُلْ رَّبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ
بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ۟ قف فَلَا
تُمَارِ فِيْهِمْ اِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَاهِرًا ص وَّلَا
تَسْتَفْتِ فِيْهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾ ع ٣ ١٥

2062. Commentary:

In this verse we are told that these people who had remained aloof from the world for a long time will become known to the ends of the earth, and thus the truth of the prophecy about the rise to great power and dominion of Christian nations in the Latter Days will become established and then the promised hour of which these people were warned will come to pass.

In the words, *We will surely build a place of worship over them*, the Quran reverts again to the early history of the Dwellers of the Cave and mentions one of their distinctive marks which is that their successors, the Christian nations, will build churches in memory of their dead saints. Muslims or Jews have never erected mosques or synagogues to the memory of their departed saints. Christians are the only people who erect churches to perpetuate the memory of their dead saints; they even bury their dead in churchyards. It is worthy of note that many such churches have been found in the catacombs.

2063. Important Words:

فلا تمار (So argue not). تمار is derived from مرى. They say مرى حقه i.e. he

R. 4.

24. And say not of anything, 'I am going to do it tomorrow,'**2064**

وَلَا تَقُوۡلَنَّ لِشَاۡیۡءٍ اِنِّیۡ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِکَ غَدًا ۙ﴿۲۴﴾

disputed, doubted or questioned his right. امترى الشيء means, he elicited the thing. الريح تمرى السحاب means, the wind draws forth the clouds. ماراه means, he disputed or argued with him obstinately (Lane & Aqrab).

ظاهرا (plain) is derived from ظهر i.e. it was or became apparent, plain, manifest or obvious. ظهر البيت means, he got upon the top of the house; ظهر عليه means, he knew, became acquainted with or got knowledge of him or it; he overcame or subdued; gained the mastery or victory or prevailed over him. They say فلان لا يظهر عليه احد i.e. such a one is a person whom no one can overcome or overpower. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse refers to a popular discussion about the number of the Dwellers of the Cave. The Quran regards all estimates about their number as futile surmises. The words, *My Lord knows best their number*, dismiss all such discussion as fruitless waste of effort because only God knows what their real number was. The Arabic expression مايعلمهم الاقليل means, (a) none knows their number; the Arabic word قليل, being the equivalent of the English word 'few,' signifies 'none'; or (b) the expression means that a very few people have knowledge of the truth about them or are acquainted with their history. These fortunate few know that the Dwellers of the Cave were early Christians who in times of persecution under different Roman Emperors took refuge in the catacombs and that they were several thousands in number.

Towards the end of the verse Muslims are admonished not to try to know the details about the Dwellers of the Cave as any effort in this direction will lead them nowhere, rather it is likely to make confusion worse confounded.

2064. Commentary:

The verse refers to the time when Christian nations will have attained great power and predominance in the world. Muslims of that time—of the present time—are warned that it would be then suicidal on their part to try to fight Christian nations with material means, because the military might and material means of the latter would be too much for any single people or a combination of peoples to fight them successfully. It is to this all-powerfulness of Christian nations of the west in the Latter Days that the well-known ḥadīth لايدان لاحد لقتالهم i.e. no one will have the power to fight them successfully (Muslim, vol. 4, Chap. on *Dajjāl*) refers. Muslims are warned that in the days of their powerlessness before Christian nations they should not indulge in idle boasts of adopting one scheme or the other against them, but should respond to the call of one whom God would raise to take them out of the slough of despond into

25. [a]Unless Allah should will. And remember thy Lord when thou forgettest, and say, ‘I hope my Lord will guide me to what is even nearer than this to the right path.’[2065]

إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ۫ وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ إِذَا
نَسِيْتَ وَقُلْ عَسٰٓى أَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِ رَبِّيْ
لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هٰذَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢٥﴾

26. And they stayed in their Cave three hundred years, and added nine more.[2066]

وَلَبِثُوْا فِيْ كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلٰثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِيْنَ
وَازْدَادُوْا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٦﴾

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[a] 18:40; 74:57; 76:31; 81:30.

which they would have fallen. The verse may also mean that in the time of their decline and degradation Muslims will lose all initiative for any real and useful work and will indulge only in daydreaming and holding out impotent threats to their enemies. All their activities will then remain confined to talking about the future and they would do nothing to improve their miserable lot.

Some commentators of the Quran have given currency to the baseless legend that this verse admonishes the Holy Prophet that he should never fail to utter the formula انشاء اللّٰه i.e. " If God so wills it," while beginning to do any work, because on one occasion before doing a certain thing he had forgotten to utter this formula. There is no reference here to any such legend.

2065. Commentary:

The verse purports to say to Muslims that in their hour of despondency and helplessness before the irresistible might of Christian nations, they should not for a moment entertain the idea that they can ever successfully fight them with material means. On the contrary, they should have firm faith in God’s promises that He would never let Islam down and would Himself create circumstances that would bring about the complete downfall and destruction of these nations.

2066. Commentary:

This verse sheds some light on the duration of the period in which early Christians were subjected to persecution and had frequently to take refuge in caves and other places of concealment. This period extends over 309 years and historical data have corroborated this calculation. As popularly believed the persecution of Christians began with Jesus’ Crucifixion in 28 A.D. and ended with the Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity in 337 A.D. (Enc. Brit., 14th edition, vol. 5), a period of about 309 years. These dates, however, are not correct. If we delve a little more deeply into the history of early Christianity the fact is disclosed to us that Emperor Constantine did not become a Christian in 337 A.D. as is the

27. Say, 'Allah knows best how long they tarried.' [a]To Him belong the secrets of the heavens and the earth. [b]How Seeing is He! and how Hearing! They have no helper beside Him, and He does not let any one share in His government.**2067**

قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوۡا ۚ لَهٗ غَيۡبُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اَبۡصِرۡ بِهٖ وَاَسۡمِعۡ ؕ
مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡ وَّلِیٍّ ۫ وَّلَا يُشۡرِكُ
فِیۡ حُكۡمِهٖۤ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۷﴾

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[a] 11:124; 16:78; 35:39. [b] 19:39.

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popular belief but in 309 A.D., as history shows. The astonishing fact that the Christian Calendar now in use is not free from chronological anachronisms has been admitted by Christian scholars themselves. Archbishop Ushers and Dr. Kitto in their well-known books, "Chronology" and "Daily Bible Illustrations," after elaborate research into the chronology of early Christianity, have been compelled to admit that chronological data show that Jesus was five and not thirty-three years old at the time when the Crucifixion is supposed to have taken place i.e. the tragedy of the Crucifixion took place 28 years later than is generally believed. Thus subtracting 28 from 337 it becomes established that the year of Constantine's conversion was 309 A.D., when with Christianity becoming the State religion of the Roman Empire persecution of Christians completely ceased. So even Christian historical records support the Quran in stating that early Christians continued to be persecuted, off and on, for 309 years.

The verse incidentally impresses upon Muslims who, like اصحاب كهف now are and may, also in future, be the victims of similar persecution, the desirability of bearing with patience and fortitude their trials and tribulations so that they may become entitled to Divine favours.

2067. Commentary:

The words, *Say, Allah knows best how long they tarried*, purport to say that histories written by Christian writers assign 337 years as the period of the persecution of early Christians and therefore seem to contradict the Quranic statement that this period was 309 years. But this calculation as shown in the previous verse is at fault because the Quran is the revealed word of God and God cannot err in His calculations. Later research into old historical records as explained elsewhere has also supported the Quran. The present verse does not contradict the words, *And they stayed in their Cave three hundred years and added nine more* (v. 26). These words do not refer to the popular view about the period for which early Christians took refuge in caves but are God's own

28. [a]And recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord. [b]There is none who can change His words, and thou wilt find no refuge beside Him.[2068]

وَاتْلُ مَآ أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۚ
لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ
مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿۲۸﴾

29. [c]And keep thyself attached to those who call on their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure; and let not thy eyes pass beyond them, seeking the adornment of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his evil inclinations and his case exceeds all bounds.[2069]

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ
رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ
وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ تُرِيْدُ
زِيْنَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ
أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ
وَكَانَ أَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ﴿۲۹﴾

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[a]29:46. [b]6:35, 116; 10:65. [c]6:53; 7:206.

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words. So the expression, *Allah knows best how long they tarried*, not only does not contradict but actually supports and corroborates these words.

The words, *How Seeing is He! and how Hearing*, lend further support to the view that Christian chronologists have erred in fixing the present date of Jesus' birth and his Crucifixion and that the Quranic statement with regard to the period for which اصحاب الکهف (Dwellers of the Cave) remained hidden in caves is correct.

2068. Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that the above account of the Dwellers of the Cave is not meant merely as an interesting narrative but refers to events of the past of great spiritual significance, at the same time constituting a forewarning to Muslims to be always prepared for hardships like those that the Dwellers of the Cave had to suffer. In fact according to Ibn 'Abbās the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that اصحاب الکهف (Dwellers of the Cave) are the companions of the Imām Mahdī (Manthūr). The words, *there is none who can change His words*, also support the assumption that the account of the Dwellers of the Cave contains mighty prophecies, otherwise there was no sense in using such challenging words as these. See the following verses.

2069. Commentary:

This verse lends further support to the fact that the preceding verses embody some very important prophecies. In fact, we are here told that at the time of the predominance

30. And say, [a]'*It is* the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.' [b]Verily, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose *flaming* canopy shall enclose them. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with water like molten lead which would burn the faces. How dreadful the drink, and how evil is *the Fire as* a resting place!**2070**

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ قف فَمَنْ شَآءَ
فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَّمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ ۙ اِنَّآ
اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ نَارًا ۙ اَحَاطَ بِهِمْ
سُرَادِقُهَا ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْتَغِيْثُوْا يُغَاثُوْا بِمَآءٍ
كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوْهَ ؕ بِئْسَ
الشَّرَابُ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ۝٣٠

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[a]2:257; 10:100. [b]25:38; 42:46.

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and ascendancy of Christian nations there will be living in the world a people who, as true representatives of Islam, will be engaged night and day in prayer and Divine worship. The so-called Muslims will, at that time—the time of Imām Mahdī—pin all their hopes about the future political glory and greatness of Islam on the employment of material means and will look down upon the poor and politically unimportant followers of the Imām Mahdī for concentrating on prayer and worship. The verse warns Muslims that on prayer and Divine worship alone will depend the eventual salvation and success of Islam.

The verse further mentions the following three main causes of the misfortunes and miseries of Muslims at that time: (a) they will be neglectful of prayer and Divine worship; (b) love of the world will be their overpowering passion; and (c) they will be wholly lost in the pursuit of material comforts and a life of luxury. But their deliverance will lie in a complete change of their outlook and the programme of their life.

2070. Important Words:

سرادقها (whose tent). سرادق is derived from سردق. They say سردق البيت i.e. he covered the house with an awning over its interior court. سرادق means, an awning extended over the interior court of a house; a tent of cotton or hair-cloth; a tent; smoke rising high and surrounding a thing; dust rising or spreading itself. They say سرادق المجد عليك ممدود i.e. the canopy of glory is extended over thee (Lane & Aqrab).

مرتفقا (resting place) is derived from رفق i.e. he was or became gentle or he acted or behaved gently ارتفق means, he bought or demanded aid or help or he profited by him or it (a thing) or he made use of it; he leaned upon his elbow; and, it was or became full. مرتفقا means, a place or thing upon which one leans, hence a place of rest (Lane & Aqrab).

31. Verily, those who believe and do good works—surely, [a]We suffer not the reward of those who do good works to be lost.**2071**

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اِنَّا
لَا نُضِیۡعُ اَجۡرَ مَنۡ اَحۡسَنَ عَمَلًا ۚ﴿۳۱﴾

32. [b]It is these who will have Gardens of Eternity beneath which streams shall flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, [c]reclining

اُولٰٓئِکَ لَهُمۡ جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ
تَحۡتِهِمُ الۡاَنۡهٰرُ یُحَلَّوۡنَ فِیۡهَا مِنۡ اَسَاوِرَ
مِنۡ ذَهَبٍ وَّیَلۡبَسُوۡنَ ثِیَابًا خُضۡرًا مِّنۡ
سُنۡدُسٍ وَّاِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ مُّتَّکِـِٕیۡنَ فِیۡهَا عَلَی

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[a]7:171; 9:120; 12:57. [b]9:72; 13:24; 19:62; 20:77; 35:34; 38:51; 61:13; 98:9. [c]15:48; 36:57; 83:24.

Commentary:

The words, *It is the truth from your Lord*, signify that the prophecy, implied in the foregoing verses, that the great material might and glory of Western Christian nations will be reduced to dust and that Islam will emerge triumphant and full of new life shall most surely come to pass.

The words, *let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve*, hint that the time of the Imām Mahdī will not be the time for waging jihad by the sword, but for the peaceful preaching of Islam.

The last part of the verse answers a natural question that arises from the first part, viz. if there was to be no jihad by the sword how was Islam to come into its own? To this question the last part of the verse returns the answer that God Himself will see to it that the seemingly irresistible might of western Christian nations is completely broken. Divine punishment will overtake these nations in the form of wars which will not end until their power is completely shattered and is reduced to ashes and dust. Molten lead and iron will scorch their faces. They will cry for peace and will get bombs and gun-shots instead. Their beautiful residences will become unfit for human habitation and life will become a veritable hell for them. All their efforts to bring about peace in the world, being insincere and dishonest, will come to nothing.

2071. Commentary:

As against the futile efforts of the powerful western nations to establish peace in the world, the tiny and seemingly insignificant but honest contributions towards this noble purpose of those good and righteous people—the companions of the Mahdī, will be crowned with success because though deprived of all worldly pomp and glory they will have firm faith in God and will live up to their noble ideals.

therein upon raised couches. How good the reward and how excellent the place of rest![2072]

الْاَرَآئِكِ ؕ نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ ؕ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿۳۲﴾ ع ۹ ۱۶

2072. Important Words:

اساور (bracelets) is the plural of سوار which is derived from سار. They say سار او تسور الحائط i.e. he climbed or scaled the wall. تسور also means, he put on or decked himself with bracelets. سوار means, a man's or woman's bracelet of silver or of gold (Lane & Aqrab).

سندس (fine silk) means, thin or fine دیباج (silk brocade) or thin or fine حریر (silk). It is opposed to استبرق (Lane).

استبرق (heavy brocade) is derived from برق which means, it shone, gleamed or glistened. استبرق means, thick دیباج (silk brocade) or دیباج interwoven with gold; thick silk (Lane & Aqrab).

ارائک (raised couches) is the plural of اریکة which is derived from ارک which means, he persisted or persevered. They say ارک بالمکان i.e. he remained in the house, not quitting it. The Arabs say ارک الامر فی عنقه i.e. he compelled him to do the thing; he made him cleave to it. اریکة means, a raised couch in a tent or chamber decorated and adorned with cloth and curtains for a bride; a bed spread upon the ground to sit upon; anything upon which one reclines; a raised couch (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The wearing of bracelets of gold may refer either to this life or the next. In the former case, the words, *They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold*, mean that gold bracelets being symbols of royalty, Muslims will become rulers of vast and mighty empires. But taken as referring to the next life they connote a spiritual sense, meaning that good works of Muslims in this life would assume an embodied form in the next. Or "bracelets of gold" may signify special marks of honour, i.e. the Faithful will enjoy great power, honour and dignity and their womenfolk will wear garments of fine silk and heavy brocade interwoven with gold. This prophecy was fulfilled when the treasures of Persia and Rome were laid at the feet of so-called illiterate and half-civilized Arabs who wore clothes made of coarse skins and the hair of animals.

The words, *how good the reward*, imply that these things will not make Muslims lovers of ease and luxury and will not lead to their moral or spiritual death. On the contrary they will prove "a good reward" for them, that is, these things will give them peace and contentment of mind.

The words, *and how excellent the place of rest*, signify that contacts and friendships formed in accordance with Quranic teaching, being based on sincere and honest motives, will not lead to war and mutual hatred but will bring about real peace and concord in the world.

R. 5.

33. And set forth to them the parable of two men: one of them We provided with two gardens of grapes, and surrounded them with date-palms, and between the two We placed corn-fields.[2073]

وَاضۡرِبۡ لَهُمۡ مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيۡنِ جَعَلۡنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيۡنِ مِنۡ اَعۡنَابٍ وَّ حَفَفۡنٰهُمَا بِنَخۡلٍ وَّ جَعَلۡنَا بَيۡنَهُمَا زَرۡعًا ؕ﴿۳۳﴾

34. Each of the gardens yielded its fruit *in abundance*, and failed

كِلۡتَا الۡجَنَّتَيۡنِ اٰتَتۡ اُكُلَهَا وَ لَمۡ تَظۡلِمۡ مِّنۡهُ

2073. Commentary:

With this verse begins, in the form of a parable, a description of the conditions respectively of Muslim and Christian nations in the Latter Days. The form and wording of the dialogue unmistakably shows that it is no real conversation between two living persons but is a portraiture, in metaphorical language, of the conditions of these two peoples at a certain time. The dialogue represents the decline and degradation of Muslims at their nadir and the power and prosperity of western Christian nations at their zenith in the Latter Days.

Now parables, like dreams, require to be interpreted, and the present and following several verses having been couched in allegorical language it is difficult to grasp and fully appreciate their full significance and beauty without putting on them a construction which their apparent form does not seem to bear. In the language of dreams a "garden" signifies wife, children, riches and life full of happiness; sometimes it also denotes cantonments and army headquarters. "Grapes" represent abundant provisions which can be stored up and last for a long time; "palm trees" signify exercise of authority over large number of men; "corn" in the case of a monarch denotes expansion of his dominions and in that of other people their "work". A "stream" denotes an eminent man and "fruits" mean fresh sources of honour (Ta‘ṭīrul-Anām).

The parable describes the conditions of two men. One of them had two gardens which metaphorically interpreted means that God had bestowed upon him an abundance of wealth and offspring in two separate periods of his life. This interpretation is supported by v. 35 below where the same person says, *I am richer than thou in wealth and stronger in respect of men.*

The words, *and We surrounded them with date-palms*, signify that this man will protect his riches and offspring and dominions with military force.

The expression, *and between the two We placed corn-fields*, denotes that in between the two gardens there will be ordinary property which will not be so strongly protected.

not the least therein. And in between the two We caused a stream to flow.2074

شَيْـًٔا ۙ وَّفَجَّرْنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا ۙ ﴿۳۴﴾

35. And he had fruit *in abundance*. And he said to his companion, arguing *boastfully* with him, 'I am richer than thou in wealth and stronger in respect of men.'2075

وَّكَانَ لَهٗ ثَمَرٌ ۚ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهٖ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗۤ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّاَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿۳۵﴾

2074. Commentary:

Singular number of the verbs اتت and تظلم shows that the two gardens were, in reality, two parts of one and the same garden.

The words, *and failed not the least therein*, indicate that these were not gardens in the literal sense of the word but gardens in a metaphorical sense because it is against the laws of nature that trees should continue to yield abundant fruits in many consecutive seasons. But the trees of the gardens mentioned in this verse yielded fruits uniformly in abundance. This shows that they were gardens in the metaphorical sense only.

2075. Important Words:

يحاوره (arguing boastfully with him) is derived from حار. They say حار الى الشيء i.e. he returned to a thing. حاوره means, he returned him answer for answer; held dialogue or debate with him; he vied with him for superiority in glorying or boasting or the like (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Now as to the meaning of the parable as a whole. In the beginning of the *Sūrah* it was said that the Holy Prophet had already conveyed the Message of God to the Meccans, and that he was now going to convey it to Christians also. Again, reference was made to the history of early Christians who endured untold persecutions for their belief in the Unity of God and whose successors became idol-worshippers and were entirely engrossed in the pursuit of material wealth.

The Quranic parable bears very close resemblance to the parable of the vineyard in the Gospels (Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21:33-46 & Luke 20:9-19). It speaks of two peoples—Muslims and Christians. The master of the garden in the Quranic parable represents Christian peoples, and the "grapevines" stand for increase in their wealth and offspring. The hedge of date-palms denotes their armed forces which in the days of their power and glory will safeguard their possessions.

The parable speaks of two gardens which denotes that Christian peoples in their chequered history were to rise to great power twice. The first period preceded the advent of Islam while the second began with the dawn of the 17th century A.D., when Christian

36. And he entered his garden while he was wronging his soul. He said, ‘I do not think that this will ever perish;[2076]

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ قَالَ
مَاۤ اَظُنُّ اَنۡ تَبِيۡدَ هٰذِهٖۤ اَبَدًا ۙ﴿۳۶﴾

37. And I do not think the Hour will *ever* come. And even if I am ever brought back to my Lord, I shall, surely, find a better resort than this.’[2077]

وَّمَاۤ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ وَّلَئِنۡ
رُّدِدۡتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّىۡ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهَا
مُنۡقَلَبًا ﴿۳۷﴾

nations of Europe began to make great progress and acquire unprecedented power and prestige which reached its zenith in the 19th century. During the interval between these two periods of the progress and prosperity of its followers Christianity resembled a field of corn which was exposed to the danger of being trampled upon and destroyed. In this interval God caused the great stream of Islam to flow and fertilize the entire world. A mighty man of truth—the Holy Prophet Muḥammad—made his appearance. His advent constituted the greatest landmark in the religious life of mankind. He gave to the world new concepts, new ideals and new values and left behind him the Quran as humanity’s infallible and eternal guide.

As shown under Important Words, "fruits" signify fresh sources of honour. The expression, *and he had fruit in abundance*, therefore means that Christian nations would continue to make new scientific inventions and discoveries which would greatly add to their material wealth, power and prosperity. The words, *I am richer than thou in wealth and stronger in respect of men*, mean that Christian nations will advance their own material wealth and political power and the poverty and backwardness of Muslim peoples as an argument in favour of the truth of their religion.

2076. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that Christian nations would be very proud of their material progress and would give themselves up to a life of ease and luxury and in their conceit and arrogance misconceive that their power, progress and prosperity would last forever. The words, *while he was wronging his soul*, mean that lulled into a false sense of security and complacency these people would be entirely lost in a life of sin and iniquity. The words "his garden" do not contradict vv. 33 and 31 above where mention is made of 'two gardens'. For an explanation of this seeming contradiction see v. 34 above.

2077. Commentary:

This verse continues the theme of the preceding one and purports to say that there will be two schools of religious thought among Christian nations. One school will altogether deny life after death and Resurrection. The exponents of this

38. His companion said to him, while he was arguing with him, “Dost thou disbelieve in Him [a]Who created thee from dust, then from a sperm drop, then fashioned thee into a *perfect* man?[2078]

قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗۤ
اَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِیْ خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ
ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىكَ رَجُلًا ؕ﴿۳۸﴾

39. But *as for me*, I *believe* that [b]Allah alone is my Lord, and I will not associate any one with my Lord.[2079]

لٰكِنَّا۠ هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّیْ وَلَاۤ اُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّیْۤ
اَحَدًا ﴿۳۹﴾

40. And why didst thou not say when thou didst enter thy garden; ‘*Only* that which Allah wills *comes to pass*. There is no power save in Allah.’ If thou seest

وَلَوْلَاۤ اِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ
اللّٰهُ ۙ لَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ اِنْ تَرَنِ اَنَا اَقَلَّ
مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّ وَلَدًا ۚ﴿۴۰﴾

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[a]22:6; 23:13; 35:12; 36:78; 40:68. [b]13:37; 72:21.

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school will regard present life as the be-all and end-all of man’s creation, and Resurrection and Paradise as only other names for national renaissance and prosperity. The other school will literally believe in Resurrection and the next life but they will also hold the belief that because Jesus had atoned for all their sins they will get salvation while non-Christians will be consigned to eternal perdition.

2078. Commentary:

This verse constitutes the reply of the poor and depressed Muslim to his boastful Christian companion. He admonishes the latter not to deny God in his conceit. He seeks to rouse him from his state of self-complacency by drawing his attention to his very insignificant beginning and by implication to the transitoriness of the things of this world.

2079. Commentary:

The verse administers an effective rebuke from the mouth of the poor, resourceless Muslim to the conceited, arrogant and rich Christian. The poor Muslim seems to say to his Christian companion that though he was poor and deprived of the good things of this life yet he was grateful to God whereas the other who had been given wealth, power and large following was ungrateful to God and had set up equals with Him. If at all anybody had any cause to be ungrateful to God it was he and not his rich companion who, on the contrary, had every reason to be grateful to Him.

me as less than thee in riches and offspring.2080

41. [a]Perhaps my Lord will give me something better than thy garden, and will send on it (thy garden) a thunderbolt from heaven so that it will become a bare slippery ground.2081

فَعَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ يُّؤْتِيَنِ خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتُصْبِحَ صَعِيْدًا زَلَقًا ۙ﴿۴۱﴾

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[a] 68:33

2080. Commentary:

The verse bespeaks the sympathy the Muslim has with his Christian companion. The heart of a true Muslim is full of the milk of human kindness.

2081. Important Words:

حسبانا (thunderbolt) is derived from حسب. They say حسبه i.e. be counted, reckoned or computed it. حسبه (*hassabahū*) means, he placed a pillar for him; he buried him or buried him in stones. حسبانا means, punishment; a calamity; an affliction with which a man is tried; locusts; dust or smoke; fire; small arrows; a thunderbolt (Lane & Aqrab).

زلقا (bare slippery) is derived from زلق i.e. he slipped. زلق راسه means, he shaved his head. مكان زلق means, a slippery place; a place where the foot does not remain firm. The Quranic expression فتصبح صعيدا زلقا means, so that it shall become smooth ground, with nothing in it or such that the feet shall not stand firmly upon it (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word used here is جنة (garden) which is singular and so are the pronouns that follow it (as also in vv. 36 and 40). Thus the present verse and vv. 36 and 40 speak of one garden only because of the two gardens one had practically perished before Islam and was not worth much compared with the other. If Christians had boasted of their two gardens it would have been an empty boast. The garden which is the source of pride for Christians is the one which flourished after Islam—their present material progress and power. Hence the use of the word جنة in the singular.

The words "from heaven" show that no earthly power will be able effectively to combat and resist the military might of Christian nations. God Himself will create circumstances which will lead to their destruction. It is to this irresistible might of Gog and Magog who represent the material glory of Christianity that the Holy Prophet referred when he said, لا يدان لاحد لقتالهم i.e. none will have the power to fight them (Muslim, Chap. on *Dajjāl*).

The words صعيدا زلقا (bare slippery ground) which have been used here are analogous to the words صعيدا جرزا (barren soil) which have been used in v. 9 above about Christians who

42. Or its water will become sunk *in the ground* so that thou wilt not be able to find it.”[2082]

اَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَآؤُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ لَهٗ طَلَبًا ۝٤٢

43. [a]And his fruit was *actually* destroyed, and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it and it had *all* fallen down on its trellises. And he said, [b]‘Would that I had not associated any one with my Lord!’[2083]

وَاُحِيْطَ بِثَمَرِهٖ فَاَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلٰى مَآ اَنْفَقَ فِيْهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا وَيَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا ۝٤٣

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[a]68:20. [b]68:32.

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attribute a son to God. This shows that the present verse also speaks of Christians.

2082. Commentary:

The words, *Or its water will become sunk in the ground*, mean that the springs of their great talents and intellectual attainments on which their material progress mainly depended or which, in the words of the Quran, kept their garden fresh and green, will become dried up, resulting in the complete desolation of their garden.

2083. Important Words:

يقلب كفيه (began to wring his hands). يقلب is formed from قلب (*qallaba*) which is derived from قلب (*qalaba*). قلبه means, he turned it over or upside down. فاصبح يقلب كفيه means, And he began to turn his hands upside-down or to do so repeatedly in grief or regret; or he became in a state or condition of repenting or grieving, for تقليب الكفين is the action of a man who is repenting or grieving, and therefore metonymically denotes repentance or grief (Lane). See also 2:145 & 9:48.

Commentary:

The verse means to say that all the efforts and endeavours of Christian peoples to add to their material wealth and power will fail to produce any wholesome results. These efforts will end in smoke and their power and prestige will speedily decline. In the hour of their misery and desolation the western Christian nations will lament that they had expended so much labour and money on the illusory things of this life.

The words, *it had all fallen down on its trellises*, show that these people will be given to erecting lofty and imposing buildings and that the calamities which will befall them in quick succession will raze their prosperous and rich cities to the ground and their eleventh-hour repentance will avail them nothing. The verse incidentally shows that the word 'garden' used in these verses is not used literally because gardens do

44. [a]And he had no party to help him against Allah, nor was he able to defend himself.2084

وَلَمۡ تَكُنۡ لَّهٗ فِئَةٌ يَّنۡصُرُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنۡتَصِرًا ؕ ۴۴

45. [b]In such a case protection *comes only* from Allah, the True. He is the Best in respect of reward, and the Best in respect of consequence.2085

هُنَالِكَ الۡوَلَايَةُ لِلّٰهِ الۡحَقِّ ؕ هُوَ خَيۡرٌ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيۡرٌ عُقۡبًا ۴۵ ع ۱۳ ۱۷

R. 6.

46. [c]And set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world: it is like the water which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth is mingled with it, and then it becomes dry grass broken into pieces which the winds scatter. And Allah has power over everything.2086

وَاضۡرِبۡ لَهُمۡ مَّثَلَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخۡتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الۡاَرۡضِ فَاَصۡبَحَ هَشِيۡمًا تَذۡرُوۡهُ الرِّيٰحُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ مُّقۡتَدِرًا ۴۶

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[a]28:82. [b]40:17; 82:20. [c]10:25; 57:21.

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not fall down upon their trellises.

2084. Commentary:

The verse shows that these people will vainly look to Jesus to save them. When Divine punishment overtakes them they will find, to their regret, that they had leaned on a broken reed.

2085. Commentary:

The verse constitutes an emphatic reminder of the great eternal truth that all authority and power belong to God and that when His punishment overtakes a people, none can save it. It also shows that the preceding few verses embodied a prophecy about the eventual destruction of Christian nations.

2086. Important Words:

هشيما (dry grass broken into pieces) is derived from هشم. They say هشم الشيء i.e. he broke the thing. هشمه (*hashshama-hū*) means, he broke it much or crushed it, namely a dry thing or anything hollow. هشيما means, a plant that is dry and breaks or is broken into pieces (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The subject of the worldly life has been further elaborated by another parable in this verse. It purports to say that in the beginning worldly life

47. [a]Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of this world. But enduring good works are better in the sight of thy Lord in respect of *immediate* reward, and better in respect of *future* hope.**2087**

اَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ اَمَلًا ﴿٤٧﴾

48. And *bethink of* the day when [b]We shall remove the mountains, and thou wilt see the *nations of the* earth march forth *against one another* and We shall gather them together and shall not leave any one of them behind.**2088**

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۙ وَّحَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ۚ ﴿٤٨﴾

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[a]3:15; 57:21. [b]52:11; 78:21; 81:4.

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looks very beautiful and attractive but its end is most wretched and miserable. On the other hand, spiritual life appears very hard and unpleasant at first but it ends most auspiciously and pleasantly. In the heyday of their power nations are very gay and happy and it appears that their glory will endure forever but once their decay and decline set in they are scattered by the winds of adversity like dry broken grass and are so completely forgotten as if they had never lived on this earth.

2087. Commentary:

Riches and children are the ornament of this life and add to its beauty and splendour and generally make men forget God but they can also be employed to serve a very noble cause. Money spent in a righteous cause leaves behind permanent good results. Young men who dedicate their lives to the service of their community, country or humanity at large are not only themselves remembered with honour long after they are dead but also perpetuate the memories of their ancestors. This is the substance and significance of this verse.

The words, *are better in the sight of thy Lord in respect of immediate reward and better in respect of future hope*, may have two meanings: (a) That good works produce good results in this life and also form the basis of hope for rich reward in the hereafter. (b) That good works not only benefit the doer himself but also his posterity. It is a divine law that the posterity of a righteous man partakes of the divine blessings conferred upon him.

2088. Commentary:

Taking the word جبال in the sense of "chiefs", the verse purports to say that

49. [a]And they will be presented to thy Lord *standing* in rows: [b]'Now have you come to Us as We created you at first. But you thought that We would fix no time for the fulfilment of *Our* promise.'**2089**

وَعُرِضُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ۗ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا
كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۢ بَلْ
زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَّنْ نَّجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

50. [c]And the Book will be placed *before them*, and thou wilt see the guilty ones fearful of that which is therein; and they will say, 'O woe to us! What kind of a Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great but

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتٰبُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا فِيْهِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰوَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ
هٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا
كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰىهَا ۚ وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا

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[a]78:39 .[b]6:95.[c]39:70.

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the prophecy about the complete destruction of the forces of evil—of Gog and Magog—mentioned in the few preceding verses will be fulfilled when great rulers and leaders of nations begin to fight among themselves, or in the words of the Bible when "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be famines, and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places" (Matt. 24:7).

Taking the word الارض in the sense of "poor people" or "people belonging to the lower strata of society," the verse would mean that the world will become divided into two hostile camps, representing two distinct and conflicting ideologies i.e. between Capitalism and Communism, and a war to the finish will take place between these two camps.

The expression وحشرناهم, means that they would be gathered in battle array, facing each other, and would fight to the bitter end. This is how God would punish them for their evil deeds.

2089. Commentary:

The words, *And they will be presented to thy Lord standing in rows*, mean that the decree of God about their final destruction will certainly come into force.

The clause, *Now have you come to Us as We created you at first*, signifies that they will become divested of all power and authority and will be reduced to a state of subjection and disgrace as before.

The expression, *But you thought that We would fix no time for the fulfilment of Our promise*, means that they had laboured under the misconception that We had lost all control over them and had fixed no has recorded it.' [a]And they will find all that they did confronting *them*, and thy Lord does not wrong anyone.**2090**

حَاضِرًا ؕ وَلَا يَظۡلِمُ رَبُّكَ اَحَدًا ۵۰ ع ٦ ۱۸

R. 7.

51. [b]And *remember the time* when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they *all* submitted. But Iblis *did not*. He was *one* of the Jinn; and he disobeyed the command of his Lord. Will you then take him and his offspring for friends instead of Me while they are your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the wrongdoers.**2091**

وَاِذۡ قُلۡنَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسۡجُدُوۡا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوۡۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِيۡسَ ؕ كَانَ مِنَ الۡجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنۡ اَمۡرِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اَفَتَتَّخِذُوۡنَهٗ وَذُرِّيَّتَهٗۤ اَوۡلِيَآءَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِىۡ وَهُمۡ لَكُمۡ عَدُوٌّ ؕ بِئۡسَ لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ بَدَلًا ۵۱

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[a]3:31; 99:8-9. [b]2:35; 7:20; 15:30-31; 17:62; 20:117; 38:73-75.

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time of reckoning for their iniquities and transgressions. The verse constitutes an amplification of v. 36 above where an analogous expression viz. *I do not think that this will ever perish,* occurs.

2090. Commentary:

When Divine decree about the punishment of these iniquitous people comes into force, they will realize the baselessness of the misconception that their rule and dominion will last forever and they will begin to fear that the civilization and culture of which they were so proud will soon perish.

The words, *What kind of a book is this. It leaves out nothing small or great but has recorded it*, signify that disbelievers will be punished for all their past misdeeds. They will then know that God is the Lord and Ruler of heavens and earth and that He does not allow any action of man to go unrequited.

The clause, *and thy Lord does not wrong any one*, denotes that the punishment will be very severe and their end very bitter but it will all be the natural and inevitable consequence of their own evil doings; the Merciful God does not wrong any one.

2091. Commentary:

It is worthy of special note that at several places in the Quran where mention is made of the punishment which overtakes a people when they reject their Prophet, its object is to warn their successors that they should not repeat the errors of their predecessors. The example of Adam,

52. I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation; nor could I take as helpers those who lead *people* astray.[2092]

مَآ اَشْهَدْتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
وَلَا خَلْقَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ
الْمُضِلِّيْنَ عَضُدًا ﴿٥٢﴾

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our great progenitor whom Satan sought to seduce and involve in trouble, is set before disbelievers that they may benefit by it and not fall victims to the seductions of Satan and reject their Prophet.

2092. Commentary:

The pronoun "them" refers to Satan and his devotees, and the verse purports to say that those who think that by following in the footsteps of Satan and by having recourse to satanic ways they can make progress in the world suffer from a grievous error. How can they, by making common cause with the Evil Spirit and his tribe, hope to make real and enduring progress when the latter had nothing to do with the creation of the heavens and the earth or with man's own creation, i.e. all the natural faculties and instincts of man have been implanted in him by God for the promotion of good in the world. So the fleeting and ephemeral material advancement and progress of the people who have forsaken the path of God and have chosen to follow Satan should not make true believers think that God has divorced Himself from the direction and control of the universe and has entrusted its management into the hands of Satan and his devotees. God has ever maintained a firm hold over the affairs of His creatures and the management of the world and will never take leave of it. The triumphs and successes of the sons of Satan are but transitory and man eventually is bound to turn to his Lord and Creator.

A somewhat deeper reflection over the verse reveals the very important fact that in the period with which these verses particularly deal there will be general talk about a new world-order and so-called leaders of political and social thought of the time would seek and claim to establish such a world-order. These spurious leaders are told that they will never succeed in establishing a new world-order which will herald an era of permanent peace, harmony and concord in the world. God has reserved to Himself the consummation of this supreme task. He does not need the assistance and cooperation of the sons of darkness to establish such an order. Whenever, in His infallible wisdom, He decrees that such an order shall come into existence, His angels to whom is entrusted the direction of the affairs of the universe create circumstances which contribute to its establishment and promotion. As in the past so in the present time a healthy world-order will come into being on the ashes of the old, decayed and rotten one and mankind will recover from

53. And *remember* the day when He will say, [a]'Call those whom you deemed to be My partners.' Then they will call on them, but they will not answer them; and We shall place a barrier between them.**2093**

وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ نَادُوْا شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّوْبِقًا ﴿٥٣﴾

54. And [b]the guilty shall see the Fire and realize that they are going to fall therein; and they shall find no way of escape therefrom.**2094**

وَرَاَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ مُّوَاقِعُوْهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٤﴾ ع ٧ ١٩

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[a]16:28; 28:63, 75; 41:48. [b]21:40; 38:60; 52:14.

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its moral and social ailments. But this new world-order will come into being not through material means but according to God's own plan and decree and through the agency of a new Adam.

2093. Important Words:

موبقا (barrier) is derived from وبق i.e. he was ruined. اوبقه means, he destroyed him; disgraced him or imprisoned him. They say فلان يركب الموبقات او يفعل الموبقات i.e. such a one rides destruction or commits sins which ruin him. موبق means, a place of destruction; a place of danger; prison; a barrier between two things (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The word موبق as shown under Important Words means, (a) a barrier between two things; (b) destruction. According to the first meaning of the word, the Arabic expression, وجعلنا بينهم موبقا would mean that these nations will set up high tariff walls or iron curtains and impose economic boycott upon one another, and according to the second it means that they would become involved in deadly wars which would ruin them.

If the expression بينهم (between them) be taken as referring to the false-gods and their votaries, the verse would mean that a barrier would be set up between the two so that the false gods would not be able to hear the entreaties and supplications of their votaries for intercession when the latter find themselves face to face with Divine punishment.

2094. Commentary:

The word نار signifies war (5:65) and the verse means that the disbelieving nations of the West will see a most destructive war approaching. They will try all possible means to avoid it but all their plans and efforts to this end will prove futile. The west has already passed through the ordeal of two most destructive wars which have

R. 8.

55. [a]And, surely, We have explained in various ways in this Quran, for *the good of* mankind, all kinds of similitudes, [b]but of all things man is most contentious.[2095]

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ۝٥٥

56. [c]And nothing hinders people from believing when the guidance comes to them, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, except *that they wait* that there should happen to them the precedent of the ancients or that punishment should come upon them face to face.[2096]

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ الْهُدٰى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ۝٥٦

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[a]17:42, 90. [b]16:5; 36:78. [c]17:95.

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almost destroyed its political domination and prestige in the world and have shaken its civilization to its foundations. Now a third world-war is staring it in the face.

2095. Commentary:

The expression كان الانسان اكثر شيء جدلا (of all things man is most contentious) may have two explanations: (1) Of all God's creation man has been endowed with reason and great intellectual faculties so that by making proper use of them he may develop and advance morally and spiritually and may know and realize his Creator. But he employs these faculties to reject truth and for other evil purposes and instead of making spiritual progress he descends to a yet lower state of morality. (2) Man is a victim of chronic misgivings and doubts which seldom find satisfaction. He is a confirmed sceptic and seeks to discover loopholes even in most convincing arguments.

The word الناس in the verse refers to mankind in general while الانسان refers to such men as have been mentioned in the foregoing verses. The verse means to say that the Quran has explained in different forms fully and completely all those matters which concern man's moral and spiritual development but the people to whom reference has been made in the preceding verses refuse to benefit by these teachings.

2096. Commentary:

The Quran has explained all matters that concern man's belief and conduct so completely and comprehensively that no room is left to an honest

57. [a]And We send not the Messengers but as bearers of glad tidings and as Warners. And those who disbelieve contend by means of falsehood so that they may rebut the truth thereby. And they take My Signs and what they are warned of *only* as a jest.2097

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ
وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا
اٰيٰتِيْ وَمَآ اُنْذِرُوْا هُزُوًا ﴿۵۷﴾

58. And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, but turns away from them, and forgets what his hands have sent forward? [b]Verily, We have placed veils over their hearts that they understand it not, and in their ears a deafness. And if

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ
فَاَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ ۭ اِنَّا
جَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ
وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۭ وَاِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ اِلَى
الْهُدٰى فَلَنْ يَّهْتَدُوْٓا اِذًا اَبَدًا ﴿۵۸﴾

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[a]2:214; 4:166; 6:49; 17:106. [b]2:8; 6:26; 17:47; 41:6; 47:17.

person but to accept truth and obey the Divine Call. But so perverse and wayward are disbelievers that they refuse to see reason and accept truth. Their obstinacy and hardness of heart seems to show that they will not be satisfied with anything but Divine punishment.

By the words سنة الاولين is meant the last and final Divine punishment which completely destroys disbelievers, while the expression اوياتيهم العذاب قبلا refers to intermediate punishments which come only to warn disbelievers and rouse them from their state of indifference and lethargy. The verse means to say that people to whom reference has been made in the foregoing verses will have both kinds of punishment.

2097. Important Words:

ليدحضوا (that they may rebut) is derived from دحض . They say دحضت رجله i.e. his foot slipped. دحضت حجته means, his argument, plea, allegation or evidence was or became null or void. ادحض means, he rendered null and void an argument, etc.; he rebutted it. The Quranic words ليدحضوا به الحق mean, that they might rebut thereby the truth (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that signs are shown to disbelievers that they may benefit by them and by accepting truth save themselves from Divine punishment. But they mock at thou call them to the guidance, they will never accept guidance.[2098]

59. [a]And thy Lord is Most Forgiving, full of mercy. [b]If He were to seize them for what they have earned, then surely He would have hastened the punishment for them. But they have an appointed time from which they will find no refuge.[2099]

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُوْرُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ؕ بَلْ لَّهُمْ مَّوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَّجِدُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَوْئِلًا ۝٥٩

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[a]6:134, 148. [b]10:12; 35:46.

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them and treat them as vagaries of superstitious and ignorant people and reject them with contempt. They accept, however, as holy writ the half-baked theories of their own philosophers and social thinkers. These verses describe the mental attitude of western nations towards spiritual matters.

2098. Commentary:

These scoffers and mockers treat lightly the word of God and turn away from it and do not pause to consider that their plans, contrivances and designs have created only moral chaos, economic disruption and international rivalries. They have destroyed the peace of the world. But though all their schemes and plans have ended in complete failure and have added to the world's chaos and disruption, they pay no heed to Divine guidance and thus belie their own experience that the rejection of Divine guidance never produces good results. What do these people who persistently refuse to see reason and do not make use of their God-given faculties expect except that these faculties should become rusted and corroded and that they should be left to their fate floundering in sin and iniquity?

2099. Important Words:

موئلا (refuge) is derived from وال. They say وال فلانا i.e. he made such a one his refuge. وال الرجل منه means, the man sought refuge from him. وال اليه means, he sought refuge with him or fled to him for refuge or protection. وال الى الله means, he returned to God. موئلا means, a place of refuge or simply refuge (Aqrab).

Commentary:

God does not destroy a sinful people forthwith. It is against His Law. He first grants them respite and warns them of the impending punishment by raising a Prophet among them who invites them to truth and urges them to give up iniquitous ways. It is only when they persist in transgression that

60. [a]And these towns—We destroyed them when they committed iniquities. And We appointed a fixed time for their destruction.**2100**

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرٰٓى اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَّوْعِدًا ۝٦٠ ع ٨ ٢٠

R. 9.

61. And *remember the time* when Moses said to his young *companion*, 'I will not stop until I reach the junction of the two seas, or I will journey on for ages.'**2101**

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِفَتٰىهُ لَآ اَبْرَحُ حَتّٰٓى اَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ اَوْ اَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ۝٦١

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[a] 11:101.

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destructive punishment comes upon them and then they can find no refuge from it.

2100. Commentary:

The verse means to say that it is not the nations of the west who alone have attained to great power and influence. There have been other nations in the past who also rose to great power. The Prophets of God came to them and invited them to truth and warned them against their wicked ways. But in their conceit and arrogance they refused to see reason and paid no heed to the voice of their Prophets. So Divine punishment descended upon them and destroyed them. The nations of the West are the most powerful nations in the world today. In the intoxication of their might and material resources, their wealth and prestige, they have cast the warning of nature to the winds and have given themselves up wholly to the acquisition of material wealth and the pursuit of sexual pleasures and physical comforts. The whole *Sūrah* constitutes a warning to these people to mend their ways and to desist from their present evil course for the day of their reckoning is fast approaching; and they should remember that when Divine punishment descends upon a people they are destroyed.

2101. Important Words:

حقبا (ages) is the plural of حقب (*ḥuqbun*) which is derived from حقب (*ḥaqiba*). They say حقب المطر i.e. the rain was delayed. حقب الامر means, the affair became marred or impeded. حقب (*ḥuqbun*) means, time; indefinite time; long time; an age; a year or years; seventy years; eighty years or more (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

With this verse begins the very important subject of the اسراء (Spiritual Night Journey) of Moses. As stated above, the followers of Jesus Christ achieved great material power and prosperity and in their chequered career left their imprint twice on world's history. This double prosperity of Christian nations has been likened to "two gardens" in v. 33 above. The first of these two periods began with the conversion to Christianity of the Roman Emperor Constantine, when it became the religion of the State, and continued to the birth of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The second and more important of these two periods is represented by the present age when Christian nations of the west have acquired so much power and prestige that the nations of Asia and Africa have had to dance attendance upon them like serfs and slaves. Between these "two gardens" flowed a "stream" (v. 34). These "two gardens", as stated above, represent the two periods of Christian prosperity and progress. The "stream" denotes the birth and rise to power of the Prophet of Islam. He and his followers made their mark in human history during the interval between these two periods.

Now in order to provide a historical setting to the whole account and complete the connected whole, a somewhat detailed description of the *Isrā'* or the Spiritual Journey of Moses has been given in the present and following few verses. Moses had foretold the advent of a Prophet like unto him (Deut. 18:18). This prophecy has been referred to in the Quran in 73:16. By putting the account of Moses' Spiritual Journey between that of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhul-Qarnain—the two periods representing Christian progress and advance—the Quran has pointed to the fact that the Prophet referred to in Moses' prophecy, who was also to be his counterpart, was to appear during the interval between these two periods. Thus, these incidents have been mentioned in their historical order.

Very fantastic stories have gained currency about the nature and purpose of the *Isrā'* or Spiritual Journey of Moses and the circumstances under which it took place. Commentators of the Quran differ as to the name and status of "the servant of God" whom Moses sought and met and about "the young man" who was with him in his "journey". Failing to comprehend the spiritual aspect of this seemingly physical journey most of them have indulged only in conjectures and guesses and consequently have grievously erred. The fact is that mention was made of the *Isrā'* or Spiritual Journey or as literally interpreted, the Migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina in v. 2 of the present *Sūrah*. Light was also thrown on the great results that were to ensue from this Migration and the wonderful success that Muslims were to achieve after it. They were also warned of the great dangers that lay in their way and of the unrelenting opposition of Jews and Christians, particularly of the grievous blows that Islam as a political force was to receive at the hands of the latter. The *Isrā'* of Moses has only been mentioned to lend support to the prophecies of ultimate success of Islam that were implied in the *Isrā'* of the Holy Prophet and also to make it clear beyond doubt that the seemingly dazzling power and prosperity of

Christian nations will endure for a limited time and the cause of Islam will eventually triumph.

Similarly, the *Isrā'* of Moses was, like the *Isrā'* of the Holy Prophet, no physical journey but a spiritual experience by means of which Moses was transported from this body of flesh and blood to a spiritual tabernacle. The Bible and the Quran both support this contention. Some of the arguments advanced in its support are as follows:

(1) The Bible which is more or less a reliable record of Moses' life has omitted all mention of this most unusual and wonderful incident and has failed even to make a passing reference to it.

(2) Before Moses was made a Prophet, he is known to have undertaken only one journey and that was to Midian. The Bible and the Quran have both referred to this journey, the latter at several places. The Bible and the Quran also both agree that Moses undertook this journey alone, while in the journey referred to in the present and the following verses of the Quran he is described as having been accompanied by "his companion."

(3) Even after he was made Prophet, Moses undertook no such journey. The Bible embodies a somewhat detailed record of Moses' life but it contains no account of any such journey and even makes no reference to it.

(4) It is well known that after Moses had been away on Mount Ṭūr for a few days his people took a calf for worship. When his absence from them for only forty days on Mount Ṭūr caused such great spiritual havoc among them, which has been described in the Bible in detail, the depths of spiritual chaos to which these people of weak faith and fickle minds should have sunk in Moses' absence on a journey of a much longer duration, as evidently the journey referred to in these verses was, can easily be imagined. The Bible could not have failed to mention it. But the Bible alludes to no such happening. Moreover, it would have cast a serious reflection on Moses' wisdom and intelligence if, having had such a terrible experience once, he should have undertaken another journey which would have kept him away from his people for a much longer period.

(5) In his absence on Mount Ṭūr for only forty days Moses appointed Aaron his vicegerent for his people. But apart from this solitary instance Moses is not known ever to have appointed anybody his vicegerent or *Khalīfah* in his absence on any journey. The Bible contains no reference to any such appointment. It is inconceivable that if Moses had gone on such a long journey as mentioned in these verses he would have failed to appoint a *Khalīfah* in his absence.

(6) It is against the established practice of all the Prophets of God to remain separated from their people for a long time. Some of them are known to have gone on short journeys but those were missionary expeditions and their scope did not extend beyond their own peoples. Jesus certainly did go to Kashmir after the Crucifixion but he left one

section of his people in Palestine to live among another and a larger section in Kashmir. But Moses' journey referred to above was not a journey undertaken with any missionary purpose nor was it confined to his own people. He left his people in search of a man who was more learned than himself.

(7) The expression مجمع البحرين (junction of two seas) occurring in the verse under comment also points to the fact that the *Isrā'* of Moses was a spiritual journey because there is no place in the world which is known by this name. The expression can have only one significance i.e. "the junction of two seas." Such junctions nearest to the place where Moses lived after he had left Egypt are Bāb ul-Mandab which unites the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Straits of Dardanelles which joins the Mediterranean Sea with the Sea of Marmora and Al-Bahrain where the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean meet. Of all these places the Straits of Dardanelles alone can possibly be the point where such a meeting could have taken place because on its way lies Canaan which was the destination of Moses but which he could not reach in his life-time. All these three points were about one thousand miles distant from Moses' place of living and considering the absence of good means of communication and transport in those days it would have taken him about a year's time to cover such a long distance and Moses could not afford to remain absent from his people for such a long time without seriously jeopardising their spiritual well-being.

From this historical evidence it can be safely inferred without fear of contradiction that Moses' Journey referred to in these verses was a spiritual journey undertaken with a spiritual body for a spiritual purpose.

Besides this external evidence there is also internal evidence in the Quran which clearly shows that this journey was no physical event but a spiritual experience of Moses.

(a) The "learned man" made a big hole in the boat to save it from being forcibly seized by the king. Now a quite natural question arises here, viz. was the boat navigable after it was damaged or was it not? If it was, why did not the king seize it; if it was not, why did it not sink? In this physical world no boat is ever known to have remained floating after a big hole had been made in its bottom. In the world of visions, however, such things are possible.

(b) The "slaying of the young boy" also shows that this incident happened in a vision because in this world of flesh and bones no sensible person, much less a Prophet of God, would take the life of another person without legitimate cause.

(c) The incident of the "repairing of the wall" also lends support to the above conclusion. How could a great Prophet of God and a most noble and broad-minded person like Moses have found fault with his learned companion for not demanding payment from two poor orphan boys for repairing their wall because the people of their town had refused to entertain him and his companion? What had the two orphan boys done to deserve Moses' displeasure? It was the people of the town and not they who had refused to entertain them as their guests. What earthly connection was there between these two things? In this material world no sensible person could indulge in such talk, much less a great Prophet of God. Such things can happen only in visions and dreams.

(d) Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said that the word كنز (treasure) occurring in v. 83 below means "a treasure of knowledge". This shows that this word has been used in this verse in its metaphorical sense and needs to be interpreted and explained. Similarly, the repairing of the wall and the demanding of hospitality were not physical acts. Thus the whole journey was only a spiritual experience.

In short, even a casual and cursory glance over the relevant verses leaves no doubt about the fact that the whole affair was nothing more than a vision. It is simply inconceivable that a great Prophet of God like Moses should have undertaken a long and arduous journey in search of a "man of God" to learn from him how to break a hole in a boat or kill a young man or to repair a wall and demand no remuneration for it. Even an illiterate rustic would consider it below his dignity to do such a foolish thing, much less a Prophet of God.

Moreover, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said ودونا ان موسى كان صبر حتى يقص الله علينا من خبر هما i.e. would that Moses had kept silent, so that God would have revealed to us many more secrets of the future (Bukhārī, *Kitābut-Tafsīr*). This saying of the Holy Prophet shows that the unusual acts which this "man of God" is stated to have performed were great secrets of the future which were communicated to Moses in his Vision in metaphorical language. If these acts are understood to have literally taken place, then they could not have excited the Holy Prophet’s curiosity and he could not possibly have wished Moses to have kept silent in order to learn more about similar acts. According to Māwardī, the person whom Moses had gone to see was no human being but an angel (Kathīr).

All these facts taken together constitute very solid and weighty evidence, incapable of being doubted or contradicted, that the story of the journey of Moses is but a vision which needs to be interpreted and explained to understand its reality and significance.

The words "his young companion" may refer to Joshua, the son of Nūn, but they apply more fittingly to Jesus. Jesus was the young companion of Moses i.e. he was the last great Prophet of the Mosaic Dispensation who came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17).

The words, *I will not stop until I reach the junction of the two seas*, show that Moses’ young companion joined him towards the end of his journey. Moses did not seem to have taken the young man with him from the very outset of his journey. The words do not represent him as having started on his journey but only as pursuing it with a young companion. Strictly speaking these words can only be spoken by one who is about to reach his destination.

62. But when they reached the place where the two *seas* met, they forgot their fish, and it made its way into the sea *going away* swiftly.2102

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجۡمَعَ بَيۡنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوۡتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيۡلَهٗ فِي الۡبَحۡرِ سَرَبًا ﴿۶۲﴾

63. And when they had gone further, he said to his young

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتٰىهُ اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا ۫

The expression مجمع البحرين i.e. junction of two seas, denotes the time when the Mosaic Dispensation was to have come to an end and the Islamic Dispensation to have commenced. According to Ta‘ṭīrul-Anām بحر (sea), when seen in a vision, signifies a powerful, just and kind king. It also signifies praise and glorification of God. In the first sense of the word, بحر (sea) the expression مجمع البحرين would mean the meeting place of two powerful, just and kind kings i.e. Moses and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, and according to the second signification, the expression denotes the junction of the two seas of God's glorification which means two religious Dispensations—Mosaic and Islamic.

The words, *Or I will journey on for ages*, signify that the Mosaic Dispensation would remain in force for many centuries. The period from the time of Moses to the advent of the Holy Prophet when the Mosaic Dispensation came to an end extends over 2000 years.

2102. Important Words:

سربا (going away swiftly) is derived from سرب. They say سرب الماء i.e. the water flowed. سرب الرجل means, the man went at random. سرب في الارض means, he went away in the land. سرب (*sarabun*) means, going away swiftly, a subterranean excavation; a habitation beneath the earth having a passage through it; the burrow or hole of a wild animal; the den of a lion. The Quranic expression فاتخذ سبيله في البحر سربا means, it (the fish) took its way into the sea swiftly, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

حوت (fish) when seen in a vision denotes the houses of worship of righteous people (Ta‘ṭīrul-Anām). In this sense of the word the expression, *when they reached the place where the two seas met, they forgot their fish*, means that at the time when the Mosaic and the Islamic Dispensations met, i.e. when Mosaic Dispensation ceased to function and the Islamic Dispensation came into force, true righteousness would depart from among the followers of Moses and Jesus and would henceforward become the special mark of the followers of the new Dispensation (48:30). The verse under comment also shows that the Islamic Dispensation was, in fact, a continuation of the Mosaic Dispensation. Being two consecutive parts of God's eternal guidance, no such thing as the "junction of two seas" existed in the time of Moses.

companion: ‘Bring us our morning meal. Surely, we have suffered much fatigue on account of this journey of ours.’[2103]

لَقَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا ۝٦٣

64. He replied, ‘Didst thou see, when we betook ourselves to the rock for rest, and I forgot the fish—and none but Satan caused me to forget to mention it *to thee*—it took its way into the sea in a marvellous manner?’[2104]

قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَ اِذْ اَوَيْنَآ اِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ
فَاِنِّيْ نَسِيْتُ الْحُوْتَ ۫ وَمَآ اَنْسٰنِيْهُ اِلَّا
الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ اَذْكُرَهٗ ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيْلَهٗ
فِي الْبَحْرِ ۖۗ عَجَبًا ۝٦٤

2103. Commentary:

"Asking for breakfast" in a vision denotes "weariness" (Ta‘tīrul-Anām) and the verse purports to say that at the "junction of the two seas" i.e. when the Holy Prophet comes, the followers of Moses and Jesus would not accept him. They would continue their journey alone and would refuse to admit that the span of life granted to their Dispensation had come to an end. Then after going on their separate way for a long time and being tired of vainly waiting for the Promised Prophet (Deut. 18:18) they would begin to wonder whether he had already come and they had failed to recognize him. In this verse Moses and his young companion (Jesus) stand for Jews and Christians respectively.

2104. Commentary:

The pronouns in the expressions, "their fish" (v. 62), "they had gone further" (v. 63) and "we betook ourselves" obviously do not refer to Moses and Jesus because they did not live in the time of the Holy Prophet but to their respective peoples.

صخرة (rock) in the language of dreams and visions denotes "a life of vice and sin." So the expression, *when we betook ourselves to the rock*, means that when the two seas met i.e. when the Mosaic Dispensation came to an end and a new Prophet and a new Dispensation appeared, then Jews and Christians would be sunk in a life of sin and iniquity.

The words, *it took its way into the sea in a marvellous manner*, signify that true piety and worship of God would take leave of these people and would become the special mark of another people (the followers of Islam) who would become heirs to Divine favours.

The incident of the fish unmistakably points to the whole affair being a vision because when Moses and his young companion were pursuing their journey with the

65. He said, ‘That is what we have been seeking.’ So they both returned, retracing their footsteps.

قَالَ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۖۚ فَارْتَدَّا عَلٰٓى
اٰثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ۙ ٦٥

66. Then found they one of Our servants, upon whom We had bestowed Our Mercy, and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.[2105]

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً
مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا ٦٦

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fish as their guide it was not possible for them to forget it.

2105. Commentary:

Who is this عبد (servant of God) in search of whom Moses, in pursuance of Divine command, had undertaken such a long and difficult journey and who is the central figure and hero of the whole story? He is none other than the Holy Prophet Muḥammad – his soul having taken an embodied form in Moses’ vision. The following arguments conclusively show that he was indeed the عبد (god’s servant) mentioned in this story:

(a) The Holy Prophet has been called عبد in the Quran at several places (2:24; 8:42; 17:2; 18:2; 25:2; 39:37; 53:11 & 72:20). In fact he is عبد الله (God’s servant) par excellence, because truly speaking the stage of عبد (servant of God) is the highest stage in the spiritual development of man and the Holy Prophet had attained that stage.

(b) The words, *upon whom We had bestowed Our Mercy*, also clearly refer to the Holy Prophet. He has been particularly spoken of as "a mercy to the whole world" (21:108), an epithet applied in the Quran to none other than the Holy Prophet.

(c) The words, *whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves*, also refer to the Holy Prophet. At several places in the Quran it is stated that he was vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure (4:114; 6:92; 20:115 & 27:7).

(d) The "servant of God" had told Moses that he (Moses) would not keep silent (v. 68 below), and the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "Would that Moses had kept silent! If he had done so, we would have been vouchsafed more knowledge about the unseen" (Bukhārī, *Kitābut-Tafsīr*). This shows that the "servant of God" of Moses’ vision and the Holy Prophet were one and the same person.

As a matter of fact, Moses had seen a manifestation of God "in the fire" when travelling from Midian to Egypt (28:30). Later on, however, he was told that a Prophet would appear from among the brethren of the Israelites in whose mouth God would put His own word (Deut. 18:18-22). The words of the prophecy signified that the Promised Prophet would be the object of a greater manifestation of God than Moses. Moses therefore

67. Moses said to him, ‘May I follow thee on condition that thou teach me of the guidance which thou hast been taught?’[2106]

قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰی هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عَلٰۤی اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا ۝٦٧

68. He replied, ‘Thou canst not keep company with me in patience.[2107]

قَالَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ۝٦٨

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naturally wished to see who "that Prophet" could be. To satisfy his curiosity God made him see in his vision "that Prophet" of much higher spiritual powers. This learned "servant of God" of Moses’ vision who has been popularly known by the name of Khizr was the spirit of our Noble Master, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, which had assumed a physical tabernacle. See also 7:144.

2106. Commentary:

By instituting a comparison between the spiritual status of Moses and that of the Holy Prophet, the verse under comment shows that the former was distinctly inferior to the latter. Moses was denied the heights which the spiritual knowledge of the Prophet had attained. The difference between these two great Prophets has been depicted in these verses in the form of a dialogue between two companions on a journey.

2107. Commentary:

This verse refers to the subject dealt with in 7:144, viz. that Moses and his people could not attain that spiritual eminence which the Holy Prophet and his followers were destined to attain. It states that the patience and steadfastness under severe trials and difficulties of the followers of Moses were not of the same high order and pattern as those of the Holy Prophet’s followers (5:22-25 & Bukhārī, *Kitābul-Maghāzī*). The Christians did, indeed, show a better example than the Jews in facing physical hardships but they too gave in before spiritual trials. Jesus himself bitterly complained of the intellectual dullness of his disciples. He was not sure whether they had fully realized his spiritual status (Matt. 17:17).

The verse also compares the natural dispositions of Moses and the Holy Prophet. Moses impatiently inquired of his companion about things which he did not understand but the Holy Prophet waited patiently till God Himself revealed to him all details of the Sharī‘ah and their explanation. This difference in the temperaments of these two Prophets was also reflected in the behaviour of their respective followers. While the Israelites continued to pester Moses with all sorts of unnecessary questions, the demeanour of the Holy Prophet’s Companions was characterized by great dignity and restraint. They scrupulously avoided putting him questions on religious matters. Both the Holy Prophet and

69. And how canst thou be patient about things the knowledge of which thou comprehendest not?’[2108]

وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلٰى مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ خُبْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾

70. He said, ‘Thou wilt find me, if God please, patient and I shall not disobey any command of thine.’[2109]

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ صَابِرًا وَّلَآ اَعْصِيْ لَكَ اَمْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

71. He said, ‘Well, if thou wouldst follow me, then [a]ask me no questions about anything till I myself speak to thee concerning it.’[2110]

قَالَ فَاِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِيْ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِيْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتّٰٓى اُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧١﴾ ع

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[a] 11:47; 17:37.

his Companions most faithfully observed the admonition contained in 20:115.

2108. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that it was not quite easy for Jews to accept the Holy Prophet. Islam had introduced new ideals and new teachings and the Jews had their own prejudices and preconceived ideas. They regarded themselves as God’s own chosen people and the sole repositories of divine knowledge. So it was difficult for them to shed their prejudices all at once. This is why the Arabs who had no past experience of Divine revelation and possessed no settled beliefs and principles readily accepted the Holy Prophet while the Jews waited and hesitated. Their rejection of Jesus was also due to the same cause.

2109. Commentary:

This verse also shows that the Journey of Moses was a vision because being an independent Prophet he could not pledge himself to obey a person, however spiritually eminent, in matters of Sharī‘ah. He was the divinely appointed Leader and Guide for his people and therefore could not afford to seek guidance from any other source except the Divine. The verse also implies the hint that it would be binding on Moses’ followers of the Holy Prophet’s time to accept him. It is to this fact, perhaps, that the saying of the Prophet, "If Moses and Jesus had been alive, they could not help being among my followers" (Kathīr, vol. 11, p. 246), refers.

2110. Commentary:

By implication the verse establishes the Holy Prophet’s spiritual superiority over Moses. Whereas Moses, in spite of his repeated pledge that he would ask no more questions, persisted in doing so, the Holy

R. 10.

72. So they both set out till, when they embarked in a boat, he staved it in. Moses said, 'Hast thou staved it in to drown those who are in it? Surely, thou hast done an evil thing.'[2111]

فَانْطَلَقَا ۗ وقفة حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِيْنَةِ
خَرَقَهَا ۭ قَالَ اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ اَهْلَهَا ۚ
لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْـًٔا اِمْرًا ﴿۷۲﴾

Prophet, though he had made no such promise to Gabriel, on being only once told by the Archangel in his Vision to ask no question, at once submitted to him and maintained complete silence.

2111. Important Words:

امرا (evil) is derived from امرا (*amara*). امره means, he commanded him. They say امرالقوم (*amira*) i.e. the people became many. امرالامر means, the affair or case became severe, distressful, grievous or wonderful. امر (*imrun*) means, a severe, distressful or grievous thing; or a terrible and foul or very foul, evil or abominable thing; or a wonderful thing. The Quranic words لقد جئت شيئا امرا mean, verily thou hast done a severe, distressful or grievous thing; or a terrible and foul or evil or abominable thing (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The preceding several verses served only as an introduction to the subject of the *Isra'* of Moses. With the present verse, however, begins an account of the incidents which Moses actually saw in his vision. Moses is here represented as having objected to the very first act of his learned companion, in spite of the fact that he had promised not to do so. The Holy Prophet, however, was shown in his own vision as having kept silent all the way. This contrast in the behaviour of these two great Prophets represented the attitude of their followers towards their respective religions. Whereas the Companions of the Holy Prophet remained loyal to their Faith under the severest persecution and difficulties, the followers of Moses ignored and defied theirs when it suited them. On the other hand the three incidents of both visions are identical in their interpretation and significance though the metaphors used to describe them are different.

سفينة (boat) in the language of dreams denotes "worldly riches" This interpretation is supported by the Quran also (17:67). In this sense of the word, the embarkation of both Moses and his learned companion who, as is explained above, was the embodied form of the Holy Prophet, signifies that the followers of both these Prophets will have worldly riches in plenty in their respective periods.

The words, *he staved it in*, when interpreted, signify that the Holy Prophet would lay down commandments which would, as it were, make a hole in the boat of the material prosperity and riches of his

73. He replied, ‘Did I not tell thee that thou wouldst not be able to keep company with me in patience?’[2112]

قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ اِنَّكَ لَنۡ تَسۡتَطِيۡعَ مَعِىَ صَبۡرًا ﴿۷۳﴾

74. *Moses* said, ‘Take me not to task at my forgetting and be not hard on me for this *lapse* of mine.’[2113]

قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذۡنِىۡ بِمَا نَسِيۡتُ وَلَا تُرۡهِقۡنِىۡ مِنۡ اَمۡرِىۡ عُسۡرًا ﴿۷۴﴾

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followers, i.e. he would see to it that wealth does not accumulate in the hands of a few but that it continues to change hands and is fairly distributed among all sections of Muslims. To effect this Islam has made the giving of Zakāh obligatory, has totally prohibited all transactions based on interest and by its law of inheritance has sought to distribute the wealth of a dying person among all his children, parents, wives and other near relatives. It has also prohibited gambling and has laid down laws to better and improve the condition and status of labourers. The materialistic and wealthy Jews and Christians could not view such a division of wealth with favour and regarded it as reckless waste. All their economic laws tend to increase the wealth of the rich and to help it accumulate in a few hands. Whereas in his vision Moses objected to the hole being made in the boat by his learned companion which, interpreted in accordance with the language of dreams, meant that his people would be too much enamoured of material wealth to accept laws aiming at its equitable distribution, the Holy Prophet in his own Vision refused to accept the cup of water offered to him which signified that his followers would prefer religion to the world.

Just as Moses in his vision found fault with his learned companion when the latter made a hole in the boat, similarly his people found fault with the Holy Prophet when he called upon his followers to spend their money in the cause of God. They even taunted him for making such demands (5:65 & 36:48).

2112. Commentary:

The righteous man of God in Moses’ vision (the Holy Prophet) is here represented as saying to him that as there existed great difference between the teachings of the two, he (Moses) could not accompany him, i.e. Moses’ people would not accept him (the Holy Prophet) unless they replaced their love of money by love of God.

2113. Commentary:

Moses repents of his mistake, begs to be excused and promises to ask no more questions. This may be interpreted as signifying that at first Jews and Christians would offer to make common cause with the Holy Prophet but later on they would back out of their solemn agreements. It so happened that when the Prophet went

75. So they journeyed on till when they met a young boy he slew him. *Moses* said, [a]'Hast thou slain an innocent person without his having slain any one? Surely, thou hast done a hideous thing!'**2114**

فَانْطَلَقَا ٝ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا فَقَتَلَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةًۢ بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْـًٔا نُّكْرًا ﴿۷۵﴾

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[a] 5:33.

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to Medina, the Jews of the town entered into an alliance with him. But later on, finding that such an alliance would entail great sacrifices, they broke it and ended by openly siding with his enemies. So was the case with Christians also. In the beginning they were on friendly terms with Muslims but their friendship soon became changed into open enmity. The Christian Emperor Heraclius treated the Prophet's epistle with great respect and it appeared that he would become Muslim. But afterwards when Christians found that the political interests of Islam clashed with their own they declared war on Muslims which continued to have repercussions for a very long time.

2114. Important Words:

قتله (he killed him). قتل means, he killed; he killed his carnal desires. قتل الشراب means, he lessened the effect of wine by mixing it with water. They say قتل الجوع اوالبرد i.e. he lessened the vehemence of hunger or cold. قتل غليه means, he quenched his thirst by making him drink water (Aqrab). See also 2:62; 2:73 & 4:158.

Commentary:

This part of Moses' vision corresponds to the second part of the Holy Prophet's Vision. In his Vision the Prophet saw a man calling him from across the road and then he was offered a cup of wine which he refused to accept. Gabriel told him that the man who called him was Satan and that the cup of wine signified deviating from the right path (Jarīr). Similarly, in the second part of his vision Moses was shown a young man which, in the language of dreams signifies, among other things, ignorance, power and love of sensuous pleasures. Moses' objection to the killing of the young boy by the righteous servant of God in his vision meant that Islam would require its followers to bring a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions but that the pleasure-loving Jews and Christians would find fault with this Islamic commandment.

The expression فانطلقا i.e. so they journeyed on, which has been used several times in these verses is exactly the expression used by the Archangel Gabriel for the Holy Prophet in his Vision, namely, انطلق انطلق i.e. go on, go on.

The words, *when they met a young boy, he slew him*, may refer to the murder by a party of Muslims of that

76. He replied, 'Did I not tell thee that thou wouldst not be able to keep company with me in patience?'

قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ۝٧٦

77. *Moses* said, 'If I ask thee concerning anything after this, keep me not in thy company, for *then* thou shalt have got sufficient excuse from me.'2115

قَالَ اِنْ سَاَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍۭ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصٰحِبْنِيْ ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَّدُنِّيْ عُذْرًا ۝٧٧

78. So they went on till, when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to make them their guests. And they found therein a wall which was about to fall, and he repaired it. *Moses* said, 'If thou hadst desired, thou couldst have taken payment for it.'2116

فَانْطَلَقَا ٚ حَتّٰۤى اِذَاۤ اَتَيَاۤ اَهْلَ قَرْيَةِ ِۨاسْتَطْعَمَاۤ اَهْلَهَا فَاَبَوْا اَنْ يُّضَيِّفُوْهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيْهَا جِدَارًا يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّنْقَضَّ فَاَقَامَهٗ ؕ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا ۝٧٨

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archenemy of Islam, Ka'b bin Ashraf, the ring leader of the Jewish miscreants of Medina (Hishām).

This verse also makes clear that the Journey of Moses of which an account has been given in these verses was undertaken in a vision because no sane person while awake would kill a man without legitimate cause.

2115. Commentary:

This verse shows that the followers of Moses—the Jews—would repeatedly break their solemn agreements with the Holy Prophet till a complete rupture of mutual relations ensued.

2116. Commentary:

The words اهل قرية (people of a town) in a dream signify, one or more nations; and asking for their hospitality means, seeking their cooperation in a righteous cause. In this sense of the words, اهل قرية the verse would mean that Moses and the Holy Prophet would seek the cooperation of Jews and Christians in the cause of God but it would be denied to both of them. That the Jews flatly refused to give any cooperation or assistance to Moses when he asked them to go with him to conquer Canaan is clearly stated in the Quran (5:22-25). The Holy Prophet also

79. He said, 'This is the parting *of ways* between me and thee. [a]I will now tell thee the meaning of that which thou wast not able to bear with patience.2117

قَالَ هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَاُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَاْوِيْلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿۷۹﴾

80. As for the boat, it belonged to *certain* poor people who worked on the sea; and I desired to damage it, for there was behind them a king, who seized every boat by force.2118

اَمَّا السَّفِيْنَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَاَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَعِيْبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَآءَهُمْ مَّلِكٌ يَّاْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيْنَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿۸۰﴾

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[a] 3:8; 12:22.

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failed to receive the cooperation of Christians in even such a noble cause as the establishment of the Unity of God on earth. Says the Quran, *O People of the Book! come to a word equal between us and you—that we worship none, but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him and that some of us take not others for Lords besides Allah. But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God* (3:65).

According to Ta'ṭīrul-Anām, جدار (wall) in a vision with a breach in it denotes a leader of a people or a learned man who has lost his property and the repairing of it signifies the restoration of the property of that leader.

In view of these interpretations, the words, *And they found therein a wall which was about to fall*, signify that Jewish and Christian religious leaders would lose all influence over their followers; and the repairing of the wall denotes that that influence would be rehabilitated. These words may also refer to the progress made by the Israelites through Moses and by the Ishmaelites through the Holy Prophet. The words, *if thou hadst desired, thou couldst have taken payment for it*, may mean that the business instinct of the Jewish and Christian peoples would grow so strong that they would not do anything without demanding remuneration for it.

2117. Commentary:

When the righteous servant of God (the Holy Prophet) saw that Moses, i.e. his followers, in spite of his earnest appeal for their cooperation in the propagation of the ideals which were common between them, would not give up their attitude of sullen aloofness and hostility, he realized that he would have to sever all connection with them.

2118. Commentary:

With this verse begins an explanation of the foregoing incidents as given by the holy man of Moses' vision.

81. And as for the youth, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should cause them trouble through rebellion and disbelief.[2119]

وَاَمَّا الۡغُلٰمُ فَكَانَ اَبَوٰهُ مُؤۡمِنَيۡنِ فَخَشِيۡنَاۤ
اَنۡ يُّرۡهِقَهُمَا طُغۡيَانًا وَّكُفۡرًا ۚ﴿۸۱﴾

The words, 'poor people' here represent the meek of heart whom material prosperity and abundance of wealth do not prevent from taking care of and sympathizing with the needy and the destitute and from associating with them. The expression 'a king' denotes love of the world and attachment for material things. The verse thus means to say that those proud and conceited sons of darkness who disdain to spend their money on philanthropic purposes are wholly lost in the love of this world and fall easy victims to Satan. This is why the Holy Prophet sought to make a hole in the boat of his people—he laid down such laws as should render their love of this world pierced with the love of the next world so that they should spend their money in the service of the oppressed and the down-trodden and instead of tyrannizing over them they should serve them and sympathize with them.

It is worthy of note that whereas in the Holy Prophet's Vision the love of the world took the form of an old woman, in Moses' vision it was represented by a cruel king. This signified that the love of the world and its pleasures would exercise much less influence over the followers of the Holy Prophet than over those of Moses.

2119. Commentary:

As explained under 18:75 above غلام (youth) in a vision signifies, activity or buoyancy, power and ignorance; and the word قتل as also shown under the same verse means, diminishing or lessening the effect or vehemence of a thing. In view of the significance of these words, the killing of the youth would signify the lessening or diminishing the evil effects of ignorance, too much power and uncontrolled buoyancy.

The expression ابواه (his parents) here means the human body and soul, because the parents or the source from which spring all moral qualities is the combination of the human body and soul which is man himself. So the killing of the youth in the vision signifies bringing under proper control unbridled human passions and lessening their vehemence and intensity. Thus the killing of the young man by the holy man of God so that he should not lead his parents to rebellion and disbelief, as seen in his vision by Moses, signifies that man has been gifted with great natural powers to perform the highest deeds of virtue and that in order to bring these powers into play, the

82. So we desired that their Lord should give them in exchange *a child* better than he in purity and closer in *filial* affection.[2120]

فَأَرَدْنَآ أَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ
زَكٰوةً وَّأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿٨٢﴾

83. And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town, and beneath it was a treasure belonging to them, and their father had been a righteous *man*, so thy Lord desired that they should reach their age of full strength and take out their treasure, as a mercy from thy Lord; and I did it not of my own accord. This is the explanation of that which thou wast not able to bear with patience.'[2121]

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلٰمَيْنِ يَتِيْمَيْنِ فِي
الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهٗ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ
أَبُوْهُمَا صَالِحًا ۚ فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَّبْلُغَآ
أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا ۖ رَحْمَةً
مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهٗ عَنْ أَمْرِيْ ۗ ذٰلِكَ
تَأْوِيْلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾ ع

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faculties of activity, power and ignorance have been implanted in him. Man can fulfil the great object of his life by making use of these powers which spring from a combination of the human body and soul. But if these powers are not kept under proper control, they lead man to disbelief and transgression. These powers have been brought under proper control and their undue vehemence curbed by the commandments and ordinances which God has revealed to the Holy Prophet as signified by the killing of the young boy by the holy man in Moses' Vision.

2120. Commentary:

The verse means to say that Islam has laid down these ordinances and commandments so that man may completely subdue his carnal desires and thus experience a new spiritual birth. But, as mentioned above the followers of Moses gave free play to their low passions and, abandoning themselves to a life of ease and pleasure, exceeded all bounds of moderation and sobriety.

2121. Commentary:

As already pointed out جدار (the wall) represents the elders of the Jews i.e. Moses, Jesus (18:78) and

Abraham of whom the Quran says, "and in the next he will surely be among the righteous" (2:131).

By كنز (treasure) is meant the treasure of divine knowledge which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus.

The verse purports to say that God preserved in the Quran the great treasure of spiritual knowledge which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus (98:4) and which was in danger of being lost because of the irreligiousness of the Jews and their engrossment in worldly affairs so that, when they awaken to a realization of truth, they may accept it.

The words, *as a mercy from thy Lord*, mean that the preservation by God of the imperishable part of the teachings of Moses and Jesus in the Quran was an act of mercy on His part because the Jews by their repeated rebellion and transgression had forfeited all title to Divine mercy. But despite their iniquities God had mercy on them and preserved their own treasures of spiritual knowledge in the Quran for their guidance.

The words, *I did it not of my own accord*, mean that the Holy Prophet had no hand in the preservation of this great treasure of divine knowledge. A reference to this fact has also been made in the words, "Nor does he speak of his own desire" (53:4).

After a perusal of the incidents mentioned in the preceding verses and their explanation it becomes abundantly clear that the Vision of Moses has been mentioned here to point to the following facts:

(a) That it was decreed and was in the fitness of things that the Holy Prophet should appear after Christians who constitute the second part of the Mosaic Dispensation had become corrupt.

(b) That because Islamic teaching was based on laws and principles which differed fundamentally from some principles of the Mosaic Law, true and real cooperation between Jews and Muslims was impossible, but salvation without subscribing to Islamic principles was also unthinkable.

(c) That Jews and Christians would refuse to accept the Holy Prophet and would follow their own separate course but they will have to give their allegiance to him in the long run.

(d) That, after a long and fatiguing journey and after having despaired of obtaining real peace and contentment of mind through their own unaided efforts, Jews and Christians would be compelled to take stock of their whole position with the result that they would realize that as their religion had long outlived its usefulness they should have given it up long before.

(e) That after the dawning of this realization upon them, the prophecies concerning them which have been preserved in the Quran will lead Jews and Christians to accept the Holy Prophet.

(f) That after having accepted Islam they will submit themselves to limitations and restrictions which it has imposed upon man to regulate his moral conduct, and that by subduing their unrestrained passions they will become resigned to Divine decree and thus will draw upon themselves God's grace and will bathe in the sea

R. 11.

84. And they ask thee about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, 'I will certainly recite to you *something* of his story.[2122]

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنْ ذِى الْقَرْنَيْنِ ۭ قُلْ
سَاَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۭ۸۴

of His Mercy.

In fact, the *Isrā'* of Moses constituted a beautiful prelude to the coming Islamic Dispensation which was to supplant the Mosaic Law.

2122. Important Words:

ذوالقرنین (Dhul-Qarnain). قرن is derived from قرن (*qarana*). They say قرن شیئا بشیء i.e. he connected a thing with a thing. قرن means, horn; edge; border of the rising sun; trumpet of the Last Judgement; nobleman; one's equal in age; a generation of men; people of one time; people of a time among whom there appears a Prophet of God; century; age (Lane & Aqrab). See also 6:7.

Commentary:

Before proceeding to know and establish the identity of Dhul-Qarnain it is necessary to state the reasons why at all his story has been related in the Quran and why it has found such prominent mention in the present *Sūrah*. A pointed reference has already been made in this *Sūrah* to the two periods of the great material progress of Christian nations. Its opening verses give a somewhat detailed account of the Dwellers of the Cave. We are told that in the early days of Christianity, Christians were true and righteous followers of their Faith. Even in later years when they came to acquire great political power but lost much of their former spiritual vitality and religious fervour, they did not altogether become divorced from their religion because till that time they had retained some faith in Jesus and because also a new Dispensation which demanded their allegiance had not yet come into force.

After the story of the Dwellers of the Cave an account of the *Isrā'* (اسراء) or Spiritual Journey of Moses which represents the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam has been given in some detail in order to show that with the Holy Prophet's appearance the first period of the material prosperity and progress of the Christian people would come to an end and though it would still be possible for them to make some progress they would reach the zenith of their material glory and greatness for a second time long after his advent. Spiritually, however, they would be a dead people and without the Holy Prophet's acceptance there would be no redemption for them. This second period of material pomp and grandeur and the spiritual death of the Christian people are represented in Divine Scriptures by the phenomenal rise to power of Gog and Magog which forms one of the central themes of the present *Sūrah*. Because politically Gog and Magog and Dhul-Qarnain are inseparably linked with each other, as will appear from the following paragraphs, Dhul-Qarnain's account also has been given at some length in this *Sūrah*.

Now as to Gog and Magog. These names were given to certain tribes who lived in the extreme north-west of Asia and eastern Europe. The fertility of the Asiatic plains led these tribes to make inroads into the south and south-west of Asia. If these incursions had been uniformly successful the whole course of subsequent human history would have completely changed and, like the marauding Aryans before them, these people would also have settled in Asia and would have been converted to the various religions of the east. But, as is explained in the following verses, Dhul-Qarnain set up a formidable barrier which prevented their spreading into Asia and thus compelled them to move further west. Thus they became hedged in between the extreme north-west of Asia and eastern Europe and instead of penetrating into Asia they spread into other parts of Europe. There they came into contact with Christianity which they accepted and made their national Faith. But these people never ceased to cast longing eyes on the fertile lands of Asia and to cherish an intense desire to conquer them. The sense of frustration at their failure to fulfil their heartfelt desire deepened with every generation till it developed into a feeling of political hostility towards the Asiatic peoples which burst forth in its full fury in the last three centuries. Thus Dhul-Qarnain's efforts to check these people from spreading into Asia, in a way, led to the great spiritual havoc caused among mankind by *Dajjāl* which is the second name of Gog and Magog. As both Gog and Magog and Dhul-Qarnain are intimately connected with each other, Dhul-Qarnain has found a mention in the Quran along with the account of the second rise to power and prosperity of Christian nations who, in our age, represent Gog and Magog.

Who is this Dhul-Qarnain to whom the present and the following several verses refer and when and where did he live? Before an answer to this question is attempted it must be pointed out that the Quran is not a book of history. It does not merely record a historical event to establish its authenticity. The so-called stories mentioned in the Quran are, in fact, so many prophecies about future events. The story of Dhul-Qarnain also belongs to the same category. It is not merely an account of the military exploits of a great and noble conqueror who lived in the past but it contains also a prophetic reference to another great historical personage, a World Reformer, who was to appear in some future time—our own time. About the appearance of this Reformer who has been called "the Promised Messiah and Mahdi" repeated mention has been made in Muslim scriptures (Bukhārī, Mājah etc.). Thus the story of Dhu'l Qarnain possesses both a historical and a spiritual significance and therefore deserves special study.

Dhul-Qarnain was the founder of the Medo-Persian Empire which represented the two horns of the ram of Daniel's famous dream. Daniel says: "I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great" (Dan. 8:4). Quite in harmony with this part of Daniel's dream, the Quran mentions three journeys of Dhul-Qarnain (vv. 87, 91, 94). This fact lends powerful support to the inference that Dhul-Qarnain is the descriptive name of a king of Media and Persia. And of all the kings of Media and Persia, the description given in the Quran most fitly applies to Cyrus. He ascended the throne of Persia after the death of his father and subsequently conquered Media which was a greater kingdom than Persia, and thus was fulfilled the second part of Daniel's dream: "and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other and the higher came up last" (Dan. 8:3).

The Quran has mentioned four distinctive marks of Dhul-Qarnain: (1) He was a righteous servant of God, and he was blessed with Divine revelation (vv. 87, 92 & 99). (2) He was a great conqueror and a kind and just ruler; and he treated the nations he conquered most benevolently (vv. 85, 89). (3) He marched to the west and made great conquests till he came to a place where he found the sun setting in a pool of murky water and then he turned to the East and conquered and subdued vast territories (vv. 85, 87, 88, 89). (4) Last of all he went to a midway region where lived a savage people and where Gog and Magog made inroads, and he built a wall there to stop these inroads (vv. 94-98). Now of the great monarchs and famous military captains of ancient times Cyrus possesses in the greatest measure the four above-mentioned qualifications. He therefore more than anybody else deserves to be considered as the Dhul-Qarnain of the Quran.

The first distinguishing mark of Dhul-Qarnain mentioned above is that he was a righteous man of God and was blessed with Divine revelation. The Bible agrees with the Quran in this respect. The Bible says:

> That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus whose righthand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel…Now in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing saying: Thus saith Cyrus King of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah (Isaiah, 44:28; 45:1-3; Ezra. 1:1-2 & 2 Chron. 36:22-23).

Thus according to the Bible

Cyrus was Jehovah's "friend", His "anointed" and "shepherd" and "performed all His pleasure"

(Jew. Enc., vol. 4, p. 404 & Enc. Bib., vol. 1, col. 980).

Dhul-Qarnain's second characteristic according to the Quran is that he was a great conqueror and ruler of vast territories. About this the Bible says:

> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem…Whose hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates…I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places (Ezra 1:2; Isaiah 45:1-3).

In this respect history also supports the Quran and the Bible. It represents Cyrus as a great conqueror and a very humane ruler who treated the nations he conquered most generously and in return received their most willing allegiance:

> I knew that there were some who willingly obeyed Cyrus, that were many days' journey, and others that were even some months' journey distant from him, some, too, who had never seen him and some who knew very well that they never should see him; and yet they readily submitted to his government; for he so far excelled all other kings, as well as those that had received their dominion from their fore-fathers, as those that had acquired it by their own efforts…More than this he was most humane. His shield is stained by no horrible deeds of blood, of frightful revenge and cruelty…He spared and made gifts to conquered enemies…because no wide stream of blood separated him from the vanquished, he found the only possible basis for his giant structure in the raising of the conquerors and the conquered to equal privileges…Who is there that approaches him? He is not only beloved by his own people as a father incomparable in every way…He was not the product and child of his age but its creator and father. (Historians' History of the World, under Cyrus).

Dhul-Qarnain's third outstanding mark mentioned in the Quran is that he conquered and established a vast empire in the East as well as in the West. Now it is a well-known fact of history that Cyrus ruled over vast territories which extended to the waters of the Black Sea in the west and to the confines of Afghanistan, Samarkand and Bukhara in the East. About his conquests in the West it may briefly be stated that he had hardly become the ruler of Media and Persia when Croesus, the King of Lydia (Asia Minor), from his capital, Sardis, instigated the rulers of Babylon, Egypt and Sparta, and rose against him but within a few days suffered a crushing defeat and opened the way for Cyrus' conquests up to the banks of the Black Sea. Cyrus conquered Babylon, Nineveh and Greek colonies which had extended to the north of Asia Minor to the Sea of Marmora. Thus he reached that pool of murky water which was situated to the West of that country. About Cyrus' conquests in the East the Historians' History of the World (vol. 2, under Cyrus) says:

> How far to the East Cyrus extended his dominion we do not know, but it is probable that all the countries to the East which are mentioned in the older inscriptions of Darius as in subjection or rebellion were already subject in the time of Cyrus. In this case Chorasmia (Kharezm, the modern Khiva) and Sogdiana (Samarkand and Bukhara) belonged to him. He doubtless ruled also over a large portion of modern Afghanistan.

The following extract also from the Historians' History of the World (under Cyrus) throws further light on the vast range of the conquests of Cyrus in both the West and the East.

> But Cyrus finding, in like manner, the nations of Asia independent and setting out with a little army of Persians, obtained the dominion over the Medes by their own choice, and over the Hyrcanians in a similar manner; he subdued the Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, both the Phrygians, the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians and Babylonians; he had under his rule the Bactrians, Indians and Cilicians as well the Sacians, Paphlagonians and Magadidians and many other nations of whom we cannot enumerate even the names. He had dominion over the Greeks that were settled in Asia and going down to the sea over the Cyprians and Egyptians. These nations he ruled though they spoke neither the same language with himself nor with one another; yet he was able to extend the fear of himself over so great a part of the world, that he astonished all and no one attempted anything against him… without a struggle the greatest empires, the two conquerors of Nineveh, surrendered to him both themselves and their own kings in chains, as had been done to none other; even Tyre, that proud and mighty city, unconquered and unconquerable, with whose lion-courage his predecessor and his successor, Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander alike, wrestled so fiercely and so long, did homage to him of her own free will. Above all, the little people of the Jews hailed him at the waters of Babylon as they had done no mortal before or since, as the victor and rescuer, the liberator and saviour.

The fourth notable feature of Dhul-Qarnain referred to in the Quran is that after his conquests he turned his attention to a midway region. Here lived a half savage people who were the target of constant attacks by Gog and Magog and he built a wall to stop these inroads. Now in order fully to understand and appreciate this Quranic passage it is necessary to know who Gog and Magog were. About these people the Bible says:

> Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the

> prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophecy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal: and I will turn thee about and put hooks into thy jaws…Persia, Cush and Put with them (Ezekiel 38:2-6).

This shows that according to the Bible, which is our first and main source of information about Gog and Magog, Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk which are all situated in northern regions were the homeland of these people.

History supports this Biblical account about Gog and Magog. Magog is mentioned in Genesis 10:2 as the second son of Japheth, between Gomer and Madai. Gomer representing the Cimmerian who lived to the east of Asia Minor and Madai the Medes, Magog must be a people located east of the Cimmerian and west of the Medes. But in the list of nations (Gen. 10) the term connotes rather the complex of Barbarian peoples dwelling at the extreme north and north-east of the geographical survey covered by the chapter…In Ezek. 39:6 Magog occurs as the name of a northern people, the leader of whom is Gog and in Revelation Gog and Magog are considered as a comprehensive term for the powers of evil. Josephus identified them with the Scythians, a name which among classical writers stands for a number of unknown ferocious tribes. According to Jerome Magog was situated beyond the Caucasus, near the Caspian Sea. This also is the same northern region where the Scythians lived. Herodotus indicates that these nomads (Scythians) came through the natural gate between the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, the pass of Darband (Jew. Enc., under Gog and Magog & Historians' History of the World, vol. 2, p. 582).

Now as quoted above from the Bible, Gog and Magog had conquered Persia and it is a well-known fact of history that "Persia fell into the hands of the Scythians or Median Emperor who ruled Ecbatana from whom it was delivered by Cyrus the Great" (Historians' History of the World, vol. 2, p.589).

So it seems quite clear that the Scythians or Gog and Magog occupied territories to the north and north-east of the Black Sea and that they came from these territories through the pass of Darband and invaded and conquered and ruled over the Persians and that Cyrus had defeated them and delivered the Persians from their clutches.

As to the last point about Dhul-Qarnain—that he built a strong wall as a barrier against the inroads of Gog and Magog—we find that exactly at the place which according to Herodotus was the pass through which the Scythians made raids upon Persia stood a wall, the famous wall of Derbent. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (under Derbent) refers to this wall as follows:

> Derbent or Darband, a town of Persia, Caucasia, in the province of Daghestan, on the western shore of the Caspian…And to the south lies the seaward extremity of the Caucasian wall, 50 miles long

> otherwise known as Alexander's wall, blocking the narrow pass of the Iron Gate or the Caspian Gate. This, when entire, had a height of 29 feet and a thickness of about 10 feet, and with its iron gates and numerous watch-towers formed a veritable defence of the Persian Frontier.

This extract shows that there existed a wall which served as a barrier against, and protected Persia from, the attacks of the Scythians in the north. It is generally believed that this was built by Alexander the Great but this popular belief is against proven facts of history. Alexander defeated Darius in the summer of 330 B.C., but this defeat did not give him possession of the whole of Persia. Without pausing to take rest he proceeded to subdue the whole country, but had hurriedly to come back to quell a revolt in his rear. After this he marched on to Kabul, where he had to face another revolt in his army and it was only in the winter of 329 B.C., that he could come to India. He finished all this journey in such haste that some historians have doubted whether it could have been accomplished in such a short time. Anyhow, it is admitted that he fought his way to India and did not stop anywhere. From India he returned in 324 B.C. to Persia, where he had again to face a revolt in his army. After subduing it he started for home and died on the way in June, 323 B.C. (Enc. Brit., 14th edition, vol. 1, pp. 569, 570). These facts show that his military expeditions were like a whirlwind and he conquered a large part of the world in a very short time. Amidst these whirlwind expeditions he could not give attention to any vast project such as the building of a large wall of the nature of that under discussion. The popular notion that Alexander had built this wall seems to have arisen from the fact that Muslim commentators of the Quran mistook Dhul-Qarnain for Alexander.

But if Alexander did not build this wall it does not prove that Cyrus built it. We are not in possession of quite incontestable and conclusive historical evidence to show that Cyrus did build this wall. Our conclusion that he was its builder is based only on the following circumstantial evidence:

(a) Darius about whom Cyrus had seen a vision that his wings would overshadow Europe and Asia ascended the Persian throne after the death of the son of Cyrus. In order to break the power of the Scythians Darius passed through Greece and attacked them prom across Europe. It is inconceivable that Darius should have undertaken such a long, arduous and roundabout journey to attack these people from across south-east Europe when they lived very near him in the north. The inevitable conclusion is that the existence of a huge wall which only Cyrus before him could have built had made it impossible for him to cross over to the other side with a large force. Nor was it possible for him to demolish it or take his army safely through its gates. So in order to fulfil his mission the only possible and wise cause open to Darius was to attack the Scythians from the side of Europe.

(b) If there existed no impassable

85. [a]We established him in the earth and gave him the means to *accomplish* everything.**2123**

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾

86. Then he followed a *certain* way.

فَأَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

87. Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a pool of murky water, and near it he found a people. We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain, either punish them, or treat them with kindness.'**2124**

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا
تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا
قَوْمًا ۗ قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعَذِّبَ
وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٧﴾

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[a] 12:22, 57.

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barrier of the nature of that under discussion it is inconceivable that, wise and far-seeing strategist as he was, Darius should have adopted a circuitous route of thousands of miles across Europe to attack the Scythians, his own country exposed to their attacks from across the border.

(c) The fact that before the time of Cyrus the Scythians made constant and uninterrupted raids on Persia but after his conquests these raids completely ceased, leads to the very probable conclusion that he must have set up a barrier which effectively checked these attacks, and that the barrier must be the famous wall at Derbent, mistakenly known as Alexander's wall.

2123. Commentary:

It has been made clear in the note on Dhul-Qarnain that Cyrus was blessed with every kind of means for his great conquests and that God Himself directed all his ways and had given him all the kingdoms of the earth (Isaiah 45:13 & Ezra 1:2).

The words انامكنا له فی الارض signify that the rise of Cyrus to power took place under exceptional circumstances.

The words کل شیء (everything) mean everything necessary for the accomplishment of his task.

2124. Important Words:

عین حمئة (pool of murky water) حمئة is derived from حما. They say حما البئر i.e. he cleansed the well of its black, fetid mud. حمئت البئر means, the well had in it black mud in abundance. حمئی العین means, a man of evil eye who injures with his eye him whom he sees and admires. The words عین حمئة mean, a well or a spring or pool foul with black, fetid mud (Lane). See also 15:29.

Commentary:

The words مغرب الشمس i.e. the place where the sun set; signify the westernmost parts of Cyrus' Empire or the north-western boundary of Asia

88. He said, [a]"As for him who does wrong, we shall certainly punish him; then shall he be brought back to his Lord, Who will punish him with a dreadful punishment,**2125**

قَالَ اَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهٗ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ فَيُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

89. [b]But as for him who believes and acts righteously, he will have a good reward, and We shall speak to him easy *words of* Our command'.**2126**

وَاَمَّا مَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهٗ جَزَآءَ ۨالْحُسْنٰى ۚ وَسَنَقُوْلُ لَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٩﴾

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[a]7:166. [b]2:26; 3:58; 6:49; 19:61; 25:71; 34:38.

Minor and refer to the Black Sea because it formed the north-western boundary of the Empire of Cyrus. The verse refers to the expedition which Cyrus undertook against his enemies in the west. "Soon after the conquest of the Median empire Cyrus was attacked by a coalition of the other powers of the East-Babylon, Egypt and Lydia, joined by Sparta, the greatest military power of Greece. In the spring of 546 Croesus of Lydia began the attack and advanced into Cappadocia, while the other powers were still gathering their troops. But Cyrus anticipated them; he defeated Croesus and followed him to his capital. In the autumn of 546 Sardis was taken and the Lydian kingdom became a province of the Persians… During the next few years the Persian army suppressed a rebellion of the Lydian. The King of Cilicia voluntarily acknowledged the Persian supremacy "(Enc. Brit., & Historians' History of the World, under Cyrus).

The words, "he found it (the sun) setting in a spring of murky water," signify that it is not a small pool to which they refer. The waters referred to are so extensive that if one were to take his stand on the shore at the time of sunset, the sun would appear to be setting in the sea.

2125. Commentary:

The words, *then shall he be brought back to his Lord*, indicate that Cyrus believed in life after death. He was a follower of Zoroaster and of all religions, second only to Islam, Zoroastrianism has laid the greatest stress on life after death. "There can be no doubt that Cyrus and his Persians, like Darius at a later period, were faithful believers in the pure doctrine of Zoroaster, and disdainfully regarded foreign cults" (Jew. Enc., vol. 4, p. 404).

2126. Commentary:

This verse sheds some light on the humanity of Cyrus and on his kind and benevolent treatment of the races he conquered. See also 18:84.

90. Then *indeed* he followed *another* way.

ثُمَّ اَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ۝٩٠

91. Until, when he reached the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had made no shelter against it.[2127]

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلٰى قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهَا سِتْرًا ۙ ۝٩١

92. Thus *indeed it was*. Verily, We encompassed with Our knowledge *all* that was with him.[2128]

كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَقَدْ اَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ۝٩٢

93. Then he followed *another* way.[2129]

ثُمَّ اَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ۝٩٣

2127. Commentary:

This verse refers to Cyrus' expedition to the East—to Afghanistan and even Baluchistan. The words, *on a people for whom We had made no shelter against it*, signify that at that time the Afghans were an uncivilized people. They did not live in houses made of brick and stone but in huts and tents. The words may also apply to Baluchistan. But very sketchy references about Cyrus' expeditions to Afghanistan and Baluchistan are found in books of history. Contemporary historians, most of them being Greek, have given detailed accounts of the conquests of Cyrus in the West but have very little to say about his conquests in the East. They do not go beyond remarking that in the East Cyrus attacked regions in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. But as Sistan then formed a part of the Persian Empire we are inclined to the view that the verse can apply to Baluchistan also because the words, *for whom We had made no shelter against it*, give an apt description of this barren and arid country, full of deserts and rocks. The verse may also apply to the people who lived in the plains which have extended for hundreds of miles to the east of Sistan and Herat and to the north of Duzdab up to Meshed.

2128. Commentary:

The words, *We encompassed with Our knowledge all that was with him*, mean that Cyrus in his expeditions was under Divine protection. These words agree with the Biblical statement viz. "I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight" (Isaiah 45:2).

2129. Commentary:

The verse refers to Cyrus' third expedition to the north of Persia—to the territory between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasian mountains.

94. Until, when he reached the place between the two mountains, he found beneath them a people who would scarcely understand a word.[2130]

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا قَوْمًا ۙ لَّا يَكَادُوْنَ يَفْقَهُوْنَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٤﴾

95. They said, ‘O Dhul-Qarnain, verily, Gog and Magog are creating disorder in the earth; shall we then pay thee tribute on condition that thou set up a barrier between us and them?’[2131]

قَالُوْا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يَاْجُوْجَ وَمَاْجُوْجَ مُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلٰۤى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٥﴾

96. He replied, ‘The power with which my Lord has endowed me about this is better, but you may help me with physical strength; I will set up between you and them a rampart.’[2132]

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّىْ فِيْهِ رَبِّىْ خَيْرٌ فَاَعِيْنُوْنِىْ بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ۙ ﴿٩٦﴾

2130. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the people of these regions spoke a different language from that of Cyrus but living in the immediate neighbourhood of Persia and, having constant contact with the Persians and the Medians, they had learnt to understand and speak their language, though very imperfectly and with very great difficulty. The region in which the wall was built was adjacent to Persia and later formed a part of it. Now, however, it is included in the Russian territories.

The word سدين (mountains) signifies two barriers. The pass of Derbent in which the wall was built was bounded on one side by the Caspian Sea and on the other by the Caucasian mountains. These two served as two barriers for it.

2131. Commentary:

The people who lived on the route of the depredatory incursions of Gog and Magog into Persia asked Cyrus to build a wall across the pass through which they made their raids.

2132. Commentary:

Cyrus said to the inhabitants of the place that he had the plan of the wall and other necessary material ready with him but they must provide human labour. The word قوة means physical strength i.e. human labour.

97. 'Bring me blocks of iron.' *They did so* till, when he had levelled up the space between the two mountain sides, he said, '*Now* blow *with your bellows.*' *They blew with bellows* till, when he had made it *red as* fire, he said, 'Bring me molten copper that I may pour it thereon.'**2133**

اٰتُوۡنِىۡ زُبَرَ الۡحَدِيۡدِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا سَاوٰى
بَيۡنَ الصَّدَفَيۡنِ قَالَ انۡفُخُوۡا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا
جَعَلَهٗ نَارًا ۙ قَالَ اٰتُوۡنِىۡۤ اُفۡرِغۡ عَلَيۡهِ
قِطۡرًا ؕ﴿۹۷﴾

98. So they (Gog and Magog) were not able to scale it, nor were they able to dig through it.**2134**

فَمَا اسۡطَاعُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّظۡهَرُوۡهُ وَمَا
اسۡتَطَاعُوۡا لَهٗ نَقۡبًا ﴿۹۸﴾

99. *Thereupon* he said, 'This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord shall come to pass, He will break it into pieces. [a]And the promise of my Lord is *certainly* true.'**2135**

قَالَ هٰذَا رَحۡمَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّىۡ ۚ فَاِذَا
جَآءَ وَعۡدُ رَبِّىۡ جَعَلَهٗ دَكَّآءَ ۚ وَكَانَ
وَعۡدُ رَبِّىۡ حَقًّا ؕ﴿۹۹﴾

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[a] 19:62; 46:17; 73:19.

2133. Commentary:

In addition to human labour Cyrus demanded iron and molten copper from the inhabitants of the place. Copper, unlike iron, does not rust and when it is mixed with iron the mixture becomes all the more hard and defies rusting and corrosion. In order to keep the pass open for traders and commercial travellers Cyrus wanted to construct gates in the wall and for that purpose he required iron and molten copper.

2134. Commentary:

When the building of the wall was completed the raids of Gog and Magog from the north ceased. The wall was too thick to be broken through and too high to be scaled. It was, as already stated, 29 feet high and 10 feet thick and had iron gates and watch-towers. It effectively defended the Persian frontier.

2135. Commentary:

The words, *This is a mercy from my Lord,* throw much light on the humility and piety of Cyrus. Like a righteous servant of God he claimed for himself no credit for his vast conquests but ascribed all that he was able to achieve to the grace and

100. And on that day We shall leave some of them to surge against others, [a]and the trumpet will be blown. Then shall We gather them all together.[2136]

وَتَرَكۡنَا بَعۡضَهُمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٍ يَّمُوۡجُ فِىۡ بَعۡضٍ وَّنُفِخَ فِى الصُّوۡرِ فَجَمَعۡنٰهُمۡ جَمۡعًا ۙ﴿۱۰۰﴾

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[a]23:102; 36:52; 39:69; 50:21; 69:14.

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mercy of God. Cyrus thus behaved like the true believer that he was.

The words, *But when the promise of my Lord shall come to pass*, show that Cyrus had been informed by revelation that sometime in future Gog and Magog would again spread to the South-East and this wall would then fail to retard or check their progress. This is the significance of the words, "He will break it". In 21:97 we are told that Gog and Magog would spread their tentacles all over the world. Metaphorically the "breaking of the wall" may also mean the decline of the political power of Islam, particularly of the Turks in Europe. With the weakening of the Turkish power the path for Christian nations of Europe to conquer the East became quite clear.

2136. Commentary:

The verse means to say that at the time of the rise to power of Gog and Magog all peoples of the world will come together and the whole world will become like one country. Nation will fight against nation and kingdom against kingdom and malice, hatred and iniquity will abound. The reference evidently is to the present age.

The rise of Gog and Magog or the Christian nations of the West to great power is also mentioned in 21:97 where it is stated that, breaking through all barriers and impediments, these nations will occupy every position of power and eminence. They will quickly spread all over the world by means of their sea-power (حدب in 21:97 means a high wave). When they have attained great power and have spread all over the world and the nations of the world have paid homage to them, then will the Divine promise about their destruction be fulfilled. The coming of divine visitation will be so sudden and swift that they will be taken completely by surprise and in utter dismay and bewilderment they will say to themselves that they never expected punishment to come upon them so soon. The present verse and vv. 21:97, 98 point to the fact that Gog and Magog will come not through a breach in any wall but over the waves of the seas, in steamships, and will hold sway over all the oceans of the world. They will scour the seas and their sea-journeys will be very quick, easy and comfortable. This prophecy of the Quran has met with remarkable fulfilment in our own time. The western Christian nations have scaled all the heights of material power. Great has been their rise and greater will be their fall!

101. And on that day We shall present Hell, face to face, to the disbelievers,[2137]

وَّعَرَضۡنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوۡمَئِذٍ لِّلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَرۡضَا ۙ۝۱۰۱

102. [a]Whose eyes were under a veil so as not to heed My warning, and they could not even hear.[2138]

الَّذِيۡنَ كَانَتۡ اَعۡيُنُهُمۡ فِىۡ غِطَآءٍ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِىۡ وَكَانُوۡا لَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ سَمۡعًا ۝۱۰۲ ع

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[a] 21:43; 39:46.

2137. Commentary:

Those will be terrible days. The fire of Hell will be kindled for the sinful. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and man will consign God to oblivion and, sinking in sin and iniquity, he will render himself deserving of Divine punishment.

2138. Commentary:

The verse means to say that at that time worship of God will totally disappear from among the Christian peoples and love of Mammon will take the place of love of God in their hearts. They will completely forget their Creator and will attribute all their great achievements to their own skill and effort.

The words, *and they could not even hear*, mean that their hearts will become so much rusted and corroded that they will lose all attachment for the word of God and will refuse to listen to it.

The foregoing verses refer to the great material progress and widespread conquests of Gog and Magog—western Christian nations—and their utter disregard for God and religion. We have also been told that, elated with their political power and military glory, they will give themselves up to a life of pleasure and sin and as a result will bring the wrath of God upon themselves and their prosperity will give place to decline and degradation. Then in despair and despondency, as hinted at in Moses' vision, they will turn to God and, having realized the error of their ways, will come back to the "junction of the two Seas" i.e. they will accept the Holy Prophet. The following prophecy of the Bible forms a befitting sequel to the account of Gog and Magog and indicates the time of their rise to power and greatness:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea (Revelation 20:7-8).

By "the thousand years" are meant the thousand years of the Hijrah—Migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina in 622 A.D. The above passage along with chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel makes it quite clear that the rise of Gog and Magog was to have begun in the 17th century A.D.

R. 12.

103. Do the disbelievers think that they can take My servants as protectors instead of Me? Surely, [a]We have prepared Hell as an entertainment for the

اَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا
عِبَادِيْ مِنْ دُوْنِيْٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا
جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نُزُلًا ﴿۱۰۳﴾

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[a] 29:69; 33:9; 48:14; 76:5.

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and to have reached its zenith in our own time.

The account of Dhul-Qarnain will remain incomplete unless the reason is given as to why it has been assigned such a prominent place in the Quran, when as a fact of history does not appear directly to concern us nor does its narration benefit us materially or spiritually. In fact, it is more for its spiritual than for its historical importance that the story of Dhul-Qarnain has been given so large a space in the Holy Book. The Quran is not a book of history. The stories of past Prophets and other historical incidents have not been mentioned in it to acquaint us with events which took place in the remote past. They are so many prophecies about future events. Some of these prophecies have already been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet while others await fulfilment in some future time. The account of Dhul-Qarnain, like other similar Quranic accounts, embodies a great prophecy which has been fulfilled in the person of Aḥmad, the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. Aḥmed was the Dhul-Qarnain of our age. Whereas the Quranic account of Dhul-Qarnain historically applies to the great Persian monarch Cyrus, spiritually it applies to Aḥmad. Thus besides its historical value the story is pregnant with great spiritual import. It implies a great prophecy to the effect that, just as in the 6th century B.C. Cyrus saved Persia from the depredatory raids of Gog and Magog, by erecting a barrier of brick and stone in their way, another Dhul-Qarnain will save the soul and spirit of mankind, from the devastating moral assaults of Christian nations of the West who are the descendants of Gog and Magog. He will accomplish his great and noble task by the help of divine knowledge and the signs that God will show at his hands. The nature of the work entrusted to both these Dhul-Qarnains bears a striking likeness to each other, only the one was in the mundane sphere, the other in the spiritual. The Prophet Aḥmad possessed many physical and spiritual resemblances with the great Cyrus. Like Cyrus, he was called the Messiah and like he, was of Persian origin. Cyrus was Dhul-Qarnain in the sense that he was the ruler of the double Medo-Persian Empire and Aḥmad (1835--1908) was Dhul-Qarnain in the sense that he saw the beginning of two centuries of several eras (*Qarn* meaning a century).

For a further study of this most interesting subject the reader is referred to Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyyah, Part v, pp. 91-93; also the Review of Religions, Qadian, vol. 17, No. 6.

disbelievers.[2139]

104. Say, 'Shall We tell you of those who are the greatest losers in respect of their works?—

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِيْنَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

105. [a]Those whose labour is *all* lost in *search after things pertaining to* the life of this world, and they think that they are doing good works.'[2140]

اَلَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

106. Those are they who disbelieve in the Signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him. [b]So their works are vain, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight.[2141]

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَآئِهٖ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

107. That is their reward—Hell; because they disbelieved, and made a jest of My Signs and My Messengers.[2142]

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوْا وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَرُسُلِيْ هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

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[a]11:22. [b]2:218; 3:23; 7:148; 9:69.

2139. Commentary:

The verse speaks of those people who look upon Jesus as their saviour and as the Son of God and to whom reference has already been made in the beginning of this chapter. This shows that the foregoing verses also deal with the same people—Christian nations of the west.

2140. Commentary:

The verse means to say that these people look upon the acquisition of material comforts and worldly benefits and upon making new inventions and discoveries to add to those comforts as the sole aim and object of their life. They have no place for God in their hearts.

2141. Commentary:

As all their labour is for this life and they have completely disregarded the life to come, so no sign or trace of their works will be left in this world and on the Last Day also their deeds will prove quite futile.

2142. Commentary:

As these people turned their backs upon God and did nothing to win His

108. Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, will have Gardens of Paradise for an abode.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَانَتۡ لَهُمۡ جَنّٰتُ الۡفِرۡدَوۡسِ نُزُلًا ۙ﴿۱۰۸﴾

109. [a]"Wherein they will abide; they will not desire any change therefrom.[2143]

خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا لَا يَبۡغُوۡنَ عَنۡهَا حِوَلًا ﴿۱۰۹﴾

110. Say, [b]'If the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end, even though We brought the like thereof as *further* help.'[2144]

قُلۡ لَّوۡ كَانَ الۡبَحۡرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيۡ لَنَفِدَ الۡبَحۡرُ قَبۡلَ اَنۡ تَنۡفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيۡ وَلَوۡ جِئۡنَا بِمِثۡلِهٖ مَدَدًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾

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[a]11:109; 15:49. [b]31:28.

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pleasure, they can expect no reward in the Hereafter. On the contrary, they will burn in the fire of Hell which will be the natural consequence of their disbelief and evil deeds and of their mocking at the signs of God and defying His Messengers.

2143. Commentary:

With the decline of Christian nations will begin the progress and advancement of Muslims and on the ashes of their departed glory will be laid the foundations of a new and better world order. At last the believers will get the reward of their sacrifices and sufferings but their sacrifices in the way of their Lord will know no end. The Faithful will feel such peace of mind and happiness in their sacrifices that they will not like to change this blessed state of spiritual bliss.

2144. Commentary:

Christian nations of the west boast of their great inventions and scientific discoveries and seem to labour under the misconception that they have succeeded in fathoming the secret of creation itself. But, says the verse, this is nothing but a vain boast. God's secrets are so inexhaustible and He has endowed His creatures with such wonderful powers and attributes that far from fathoming the secret of creation, what these people will be able to discover after all their striving will not be even as much as a drop in the ocean.

The verse also hints that those will be the days of publicity and innumerable books on all sorts of subjects will be published but even then the vast ocean of knowledge will remain unfathomed.

111. Say, [a]'I am only a man like yourselves; *but* I have received the revelation that your God is only One God. [b]So let him who hopes to meet his Lord, do good deeds, and let him join no *god* in the worship of his Lord.'2145

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ
اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوْا
لِقَآءَ رَبِّهٖ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّلَا
يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿١١١﴾ ١٢ ع ٩ ٣

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[a]14:12; 41:7. [b]2:47,224; 11:30; 29:6; 84:7.

2145. Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the disbelieving Christian people that, even after having disclosed so many secrets of the unknown and having made great prophecies about the ultimate triumph of his cause and the downfall of Christian nations, he cannot claim to be a son of God or to have been endowed with Divine powers. He is but a human being and his greatest merit lies in his being the bearer of the Divine Message. If disbelievers too desire to be blessed with revelation, they should also give up associating false gods with Allah. Then will God bestow His favours upon them and lay open to them the treasures of heavenly secrets.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the recitation of the last ten verses of this chapter makes one secure against the spiritual onslaughts of the *Dajjāl*. This shows that the *Dajjāl* and Gog and Magog are one and the same people—Christian nations of the West; the *Dajjāl* representing the evil aspect of their religious propaganda and Gog and Magog their material and political predominance.